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1909 HOOTING

SKETCHES

D. Higson

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SEAFOWL
SHOOTING SKETCHES.

Preston :

PRINTED BY G. TOULMIN AND SONS,
AT THE GUARDIAN PRINTING WORKS.

Daniel Higson

Seafowl Shooting Sketches

Being chiefly a series of adventures
on the River Ribble in pursuit of
wild fowl—with several additional
chapters. A few Notes on Birds,
Guns, and Accessories, and on
:: :: Stringing the Cross-Bow. :: ::

NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION

—BY—

DANIEL HIGSON.

Ars Longa Vita Brevis.

PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR

—BY—

ALFRED HALEWOOD, 37, FRIARGATE, PRESTON,

1909.

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Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, Bart., kindly permits the use of the following letter :—

March 29, 1887.
Thirkleby Park,
Thirsk.

Dear Sir,—

I have received your little book on “Wildfowl Shooting.” I accept it as a compliment from a true sportsman, and from one whom, in his sport, I can thoroughly sympathise with. I think there is a large amount of real sport in your little book. I am not one of those who judge of sport by the numbers killed; I rather judge of it by the exertion, cleverness, and care that has been taken to achieve success, whether such success consists in killing one or fifty birds at a shot, so long as the birds are wild and the surroundings interesting. I am glad to see you are a collector, and know the habits and species of the many birds one sees on the coast. This gives a shooter double the interest in a day’s fowling to that which a man can enjoy who merely shoots a bird because it **is** a bird. Wishing you long life and health to enjoy our mutual sport.

I am,
Yours faithfully,

RALPH PAYNE-GALLWEY.

D. Higson, Esq.,
Preston.

PREFACE.

The following sketches were written at various times, and if not very exciting, have, at least, the merit of truthfulness.

Having kept a diary for over 40 years, with a one-volume summary of birds obtained, it has been an easy matter to refresh my memory as to the various incidents.

I rarely get out on the water now, the bicycle having superseded the boat, though I still follow the wildfowl, and have often carried the gun or the crossbow on the cycle. Strange association of the ancient and modern, in the latter case.

A few words about shooting. I am sure it ought to be encouraged instead of obstructed. When I began, provided it was not used at game, anyone could carry and use a gun.

I know that the most intelligent people, who have never handled firearms when young, are a long time before they get accustomed to them.

It will be little use attempting to teach the use of weapons when the enemy is thundering at the gate.

And you cannot get men to voluntarily practice at a dead mark; they naturally want to show some "game."

There is something to be said as to the charge of cruelty in shooting, and I deplore it as much as anyone. I also try to make use of what I shoot.

I would suggest that, instead of license, a tax of about $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per shot, which could be imposed on gunpowder, would raise far more revenue. It would be real "fiscal reform." And those who shot most would pay most.

But if licenses are insisted on, why not license the gun, and have a small disc inserted in the heel plate, so that anyone could see at a glance if the license were paid?

I trust the new Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland may be able to do some good by endeavouring to get the various Wildfowl Protection Acts amended and consolidated.

There should be one close time for all the kingdom.

21st January, 1909.

NOTES FROM A DEFENCE OF SEAFOWL SHOOTING.

I wrote the following on the 28th January, 1887, and it appeared in the current issue of the "Preston Herald." The reference to the Boer War would almost seem to be prophetic:—

"To his Most Excellent Majesty William the Fourth, this attempt to instruct the rising generation in an art for which we have long been the first nation in the world, and an exercise acknowledged as being calculated to invigorate us for the service of our king and country, is, with gracious permission, most respectfully dedicated by his Majesty's ever dutiful servant and loyal subject, Peter Hawker." Original dedication in 1830 of Hawker's Instructions to Young Sportsmen.

I have quoted Colonel Hawker's dedication, in which he speaks of shooting as fitting us for the service of our king and country. I hope the conditions are not different under a queen. Had there been more practical shooters in the late Boer campaign we should not have been so disgracefully defeated. Skirmishing (in which the ability to get under cover and shoot well and quickly is the desideratum), in the opinion of many authorities, is the future method of conducting war. And where, pray, can you find one better qualified than the wildfowl shooter for this kind of work? I am aware of the difference between a "scattergun," as the Americans call it, and a rifle, still I maintain that ability to use one gives a confidence in using the other. In the course of experience, extending over 20 years, I claim to know a little of the subject.

I would call attention to the well-known verse of Lord Byron,
 “the poet peer and peerless poet:”

“Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,
 And marvel men should quit the easy chair,
 The toilsome way and long, long league to trace.
 Oh, there is sweetness in the mountain air,
 And life that bloated ease can never hope to share.”

* * *

The author of “Fowling,” a poem published in 1808, says
 (page 7):—

“Ye fowlers! manly strength your toils require;
 Defiance of the summer’s burning sun
 And winter’s keenest blast of hail or storm,
 Of ice, or driving snow; nor must the marsh,
 That quivers to your step, deter you, nor the brake
 That seems impervious.”

* * *

And, again, (page 8):—

“Be silent, Prejudice; nor call our sport
 By any term severe. Bigot, forbear,
 Nor dare arraign us at your angry bar!
 Has the Creator made, himself, the grant
 Of ev’ry living thing—fish, fowl, or beast—
 To lordly man, and shall your vain decree
 Annul the grant?”

* * *

The prefaces to Stonehenge’s “British Rural Sports” and
 Dougall’s “Shooting” ought to be read by all who are inter-
 ested in, or have anything to do, with shooting.

In conclusion, let me say that, as long as I am able, I hope
 to use my gun, and intend, barring accidents, to do so until the
 great sportsman “Death” consigns me to rest. Like the Apostle
 Paul in another cause, I have followed my hobby in weariness and
 fasting, and looking round at some of the specimens I have
 obtained, can feel that my labour has not been altogether in
 vain.

ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION.

"Nay, if you come to that, Sir, have not the wisest of men in all ages, not excepting Solomon himself,—have they not had their HOBBY HORSES:—their running horses,—their coins and their cockle-shells, their drums and their trumpets, their fiddles and their pallets,—their maggots and their butterflies?—And so long as a man rides his HOBBY HORSE peaceably and quietly along the King's Highway, and neither compels you nor me to get up behind him,—pray, sir, what have either you or I to do with it?"

Tristram Shandy.

The following sketches were originally published in the "Shooting Times" and the "Preston Herald." As information about localities for sea-fowl shooting is eagerly sought by many ardent gunners, resident inland, who, like myself, cannot afford regular shooting, and, in addition, prefer the increased excitement and adventure experienced in the pursuit of wildfowl, the sketches are now issued in book form.

What an attraction there is in the "unchangeable" sea, as Byron so beautifully calls it! What an exhilarating sense of freedom there is in walking along the shore, gun in hand, in the early morning when nature is still half asleep; then, if alone, is the time for contemplation. Many a difficult problem may be thought out. If with a chosen friend; what delightful confidences may be exchanged!

I conceive that shooting is the most natural hobby a person can have. Few men care to take a "constitutional" for its own sake; but set an object before a man, and the most indifferent will, as a rule, energetically strive to attain it.

Personally, I have followed shooting under many difficulties, and I shall be glad if my experiences smooth the way a little for other brethren of the craft. Both theoretically and practically I have for over twenty years been an ardent student of the "art of fowling."

The incidents described in the following pages are taken from my diary, and are strictly accurate, therefore any information gleaned can be relied upon. I am aware that no great amount of sport in the ordinary sense of the term was obtained, still, buoyed up by the hope of doing something, whenever out with friends, the unanimous verdict on our return has almost invariably been, "We've thoroughly enjoyed ourselves."

DANIEL HIGSON.

March, 1887.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING SKETCHES.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING AT MORECAMBE BAY (1869), FLEETWOOD (1872), AND CROSBY (1875).

I made my first essay at seafowl shooting (when living at Lees, near Oldham), at Morecambe in August, 1868, and that day quite settled me as to what I considered the "ne plus ultra" of enjoyment. We had scarcely got down to the beach when a shore-loafer, in a red Garibaldi shirt, accosted us with, "Want a little shooting, gentlemen?" To this we replied in the affirmative, and our guide consigned us to the charge of a weather-beaten old fellow, in whose boat we soon made ourselves comfortable.

We charged our weapons, mine a double-muzzle loader, a present from my father, while my friend, John Stephenson, had an old single of mine, which I was proud of having stocked myself. In the course of an hour or two I bagged a couple of gulls, and my companion a single one. Didn't we feel pleased and happy when we landed for refreshment?

Then, after a cup of tea, we set out to tramp along the shore where we got a few smaller birds, having a long stalk after a lot of rooks, which, rising, wheeled off over the water before we could get within shot. We now took another boat, but I only got one bird.

Landing on a sandbank, we observed a lot of "baulks" with nets attached to them, with a well in one corner of the concern. Now there was a large fish floundering about in this place, and my friend, leaping over the barrier of net-work, was about to appropriate the said fish, when a man made his appearance and claimed the spoil, asking if "We wanted to take the bread out of his mouth?" We apologised, and passed on. Now, strange as it seems, we did not know that we had been attempting a petty larceny. How deliciously verdant we were.

Our next proceeding was to fill our gun "stockings" with shell fish, which we lugged to an hotel near the station. We had a few glasses of wine, after which our spirits rose so much that we threw away our loads of "fish," and, getting in the train, soon were on our way home.

A gull which I had shot, being only slightly wounded at the extremity of one wing, I carried it safely home, and, first dressing its wound, turned it into the garden, where it used to pick up worms and swim about in a small fish pond. In the house it would sit near the fire, and it took a particular delight in playfully pecking at the wondering eyes of a kitten we had. The kitten would put up with it for a time, but at the finish generally ran away pursued by the gull. The poor bird's end was rather singular. A sore formed on one of its legs, and I took it to a poultry "doctor," who put some kind of a strong poultice on the leg. The result was, we found our pet dead on the following morning.

After an interval of some years, during which time I went to Australia, via the Cape of Good Hope, returning by Cape Horn, thus sailing round the world, I determined to have another go at the seafowl.

Therefore, early one Monday morning, in the beginning of August, in company with my brother William and our friend Gartside, I arrived at the miserable little station which Fleetwood then boasted, and were not long in getting to the water-side, where we engaged a boat for a few hours. The boatman, in answer to our eager inquiries, said there was not much sport, the birds being too wild. As soon as we had got fairly off, I proceeded to load my gun, a double muzzle-loader; whilst my brother did the same with his, a long single muzzle-loading 11-bore.

Our boatman, plying his oars industriously, we were soon off the mussel beds, where we could see a lot of large gulls and curlews feeding. However, they proved to be quite equal to the occasion, and veered off just as we were felicitating ourselves on being nearly in range. We gave them a barrel each, but it was no use. Scarcely had I re-charged, when a flock of sea swallows flew over the boat, and I dropped a couple right and left.

Perceiving the others hovering over the dead ones, I hurriedly re-charged, but by the time that interesting occupation was concluded the birds were just circling out of reach. We went a little farther on, and I succeeded in getting another couple, and while again rapidly charging the gun, not looking at what I was doing, but keeping my eyes on the birds, I managed to give the knuckle of my right forefinger an awkward cut on the muzzle of the gun, which was of the old commended thickness of a worn sixpence. I had to wrap a portion of my handkerchief round the finger, and it did not improve my shooting.

Soon after this event G., seeing a large gull flying past in nice range, snatched my brother's gun out of his hands, and, although he had never fired at anything living before, brought

the bird down very neatly, much to our surprise and his own gratification. Unfortunately, the gull was not dead, and managed to swim over some shallows, where our boat could not follow.

Whether it was joy at hitting the bird, or sorrow at losing it, I could not tell, but G., immediately the affair was over, applied himself to his bottle, and kept pretty constantly at it for the rest of the day. I shot a purre, and my brother killed a gull, after which we returned to shore for dinner. We enjoyed a well-earned meal, had a smoke, and then discovered, to our disgust, that it was raining heavily. However, as we had come so far for our sport, and had only the single day at liberty, we determined to go on.

Replenishing our flasks with the best Scotch, we set out to walk up the river bank, meeting by the way a couple of fellow townsmen, likewise on sport intent. With mutual good wishes we parted, they to dine, we to shoot.

At that time there was a pretty good marsh not very far from the station, but since transformed into a dock or docks. Well, we wandered over this marsh, and, to make sure of the gun going off, I shot a couple of small waders, preparatory to a more careful loading. The rain was still coming down steadily, and seeing nothing else in range, I stalked a large flock of starlings. They rose rather wild, and I only picked up six for both barrels.

Meanwhile, my brother and G. were having a good time of it with a lot of other small fry. I got on the embankment of the old railway, which formerly ran along the edge of the water, but seeing nothing but pures, &c., I deemed it advisable to seek shelter from the steady downpour. Accordingly, I struck across the marsh, and came to a deserted hut near a brickfield, and getting under the partial protection of the eaves, charged and lit my pipe. As I was wet through, I thought a drop of Scotch would be the best thing under the circumstances, and accordingly felt for the flask. Imagine my dismay when I could not find it. It was quite another damper. At this moment I heard a shrill call, and, looking up, there were half-a-dozen red-shanks whirling by. I threw the gun up, and when well to the front pulled, and down one came with a broken wing. The second barrel, fired at a great distance, was a miss. Picking up the bird, I resumed my watch, but nothing in range passed by, though I could hear birds calling all round, and also the repeated reports of my brother's gun.

At length he and G. made their appearance, both very wet, and appearing not to care a rap for the rain. Close to the hut they halted, and whilst my brother charged the gun, G. stood by gravely watching, and applying a different kind of charge to his own muzzle. When they got up to me I was shivering with

my wet garments, and asked G. for a drink, at the same time explaining that I had lost my flask. G. put his hand in his pocket, and, to my astonishment, presented me with my own flask, but empty. He said that while charging the gun I had taken it out by mistake for the powder flask, and passed it to him to hold for a moment, and that he had forgotten to return it. I had a shrewd suspicion that he had taken it from my pocket, but he denied it, though from his manner I think I was right. In either case it was a good joke, and we all enjoyed it very much.

Our time being nearly up, we proceeded to the town, where we got something to eat, and then took the train. Our friend G. was very lively and musical. He was also very thirsty, and left the carriage for a drink. That was the last we saw of him for the day, as the train moved on without him, and we arrived at home safely, well pleased with our day's out. The next time I saw G. he had a long tale to tell me about his adventures after leaving the train. He went to the refreshment-room and called for a glass of beer, when, putting his hand in his pocket, he discovered his purse was missing! His railway ticket was, however, all right, and two friends, chancing to come in on their return journey, soon came to his assistance, and, getting him in the next train, came along with him home. In return for their kindness, he made them a present of the few birds he had killed. I have been on similar excursions to Fleetwood many times since then, but never enjoyed myself more.

Early one August, a few years after, I spent a couple of days at Crosby, near Liverpool. It was evening when I and my youngest brother arrived, and, as we were paying a visit to an uncle, I did not care to go out, though I had, of course, brought a gun with me. Whilst conversing with my relative, I heard several shots, and this was more than I could stand, so I took the gun and made tracks to the shore, along with my brother and a juvenile cousin. We were soon on the beach, and I saw that there were plenty of small waders about. A sportsman, who was already on the war-path, had a pocketful of sanderlings, &c. I saw him stalk a flock and get 13 birds for both barrels with his 20-bore. After this salute they naturally became more shy. I managed, though, to pick up half-a-dozen with my 12-bore central fire, all sanderlings.

As it was now dark, we gave up the pursuit, and after a good supper turned in. Next morning my brother and I were up with the lark, and after putting on leggings and overcoats, notwithstanding a heavy downfall of rain, we again turned out. I got several shots at small flocks, and bagged exactly a dozen birds—all sanderlings. We went a long way on the shore to the north, and passed a very formidable triangular structure, on

which was painted in exceedingly large letters, "Beware of the quicksands." Of course, we gave the concern a wide berth, at the same time feeling grateful to the authorities for erecting the warning post.

We saw a lot of gulls and a few ducks, but all wild; and as the rain showed no signs of abatement, we gave up about nine o'clock. I shot another bird as I came away from the shore, and when we got back to breakfast we were as near wet through as possible. I have never tried Crosby since.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING AT HOLYHEAD (1876), HOYLAKE
(1877), AND CLEETHORPES (1878).

Having arranged with my friend, John Heywood, to spend a few days at Holyhead, he set out on Saturday, having fixed a rendezvous at that place, whilst I deferred my departure to Monday, the 31st July. I was much surprised, however, on the Monday morning to receive a letter from my friend, dated from Conway (where he had some friends), saying that he was staying there, that I had better join him, and we could go on to Holyhead after, if we thought fit.

I was quite agreeable to this, but, unfortunately, the letter did not contain any address. Therefore, my only chance was the prospect of Heywood meeting the train at Conway. Well, I left at one o'clock, and had a very nice ride, seeing plenty of birds between Chester and Anglesea. Lapwings, rooks, wood-pigeons, gulls, herons, &c., were feeding along the shore and in the fields.

The train stopped about 20 minutes at Conway, but as no one appeared, I reluctantly determined to adhere to the original programme. It rained hard as I proceeded from Holyhead station to the London Inn, where I put up.

After partaking of some refreshment, I sent for a boatman and told him to come to me at daybreak. I got a large bottle of beer with a loaf and some cheese ready for morning, and retired to rest anticipating good sport, but feeling anything but cheerful on account of the blunder my friend had made.

I rose at 3.45, and making a slight breakfast, set out for the harbour in company with the boatman and his mate, who had duly made their appearance. There were a lot of rooks flying about, so, by way of getting my hand in, I floored one, when the rest flew off. We now embarked, and pulled for the old harbour, where a fair quantity of birds were knocking about; but they were very wild. On an embankment a few rabbits were playing, but as soon as the boat came near they bolted into their burrows.

I had a good many shots, and landed several times, trying to stalk both herons and curlews, but it was no use. To walk quietly over the slippery boulders, covered with slimy seaweed, was utterly impossible, so I had to give it up. I devoted a short time to the examination of the ruins of a small chapel, but there was too little of it left to have much interest for me.

After eating some luncheon, I again went in the boat and hoisting the sail, which was an ordinary fisherman's standing lug, necessitating its being lowered and rehoisted at every tack, and a great nuisance, we beat about the harbour. The wind getting very strong, one man was constantly employed in bailing. Whilst we were pitching about, a few redshanks went over. I managed to drop one, which was, with some difficulty, bagged.

I fired several times at oyster catchers, curlews, and gulls, but in vain. For one thing, my cartridges contained No. 5 and 6 shot, which was much too small. Threes they ought to have been at the least. We sailed about for a long time trying to get a diver, of which they were several very large ones—they kept out of our range, however. I dropped a purre, ring dotterel, and young herring gull, and this concluded the sport. H.M.S. Achilles was lying in the harbour, and as we sailed by I could see the marine sentry pacing the quarterdeck. I wondered whether he was envying us. He had no occasion.

At 2.30 I gave it up in disgust, and instead of staying a few days, came away on the 3.15 train. No doubt, if my friend had shot with me, I should have viewed things more "*colour du rose*"; as it was, I was annoyed at missing him, and consequently shot badly. The boatman's charge was 15s., which would have covered the day if I had cared to stop, so that it may be considered pretty reasonable. Taking it altogether, I should scarcely recommend Holyhead. I have had much better sport nearer home.

The next season, along with Stephenson, whose keenness after sport is about equal to my own, I visited Hilbre Island, in the estuary of the Dee. We arose early on the 1st of August, and after a substantial breakfast took the train for Liverpool.

Our reason for going to Hilbre Island was that the opening day for seafowl shooting in our own county had been postponed to the 1st September, whereas in Cheshire there was no alteration in the Act, and we could legitimately begin on the 1st of August. As we expected principally to see small shore birds, our cartridges were loaded with eights shot, having, however, a few charged with fours.

Arriving at Liverpool, we were not long in crossing over to Birkenhead in one of the magnificent ferry-boats. Then we boarded a tramcar, which took us along the docks and wharves to the Docks Station. Here we booked for Hoylake, and transferred ourselves and "*impedimenta*" to the train. In half-an-hour or so we were at the Hoylake Station, and after calling for refreshment at one of the hotels, we engaged a couple of boatmen to take us across to the island, an island only at high water, I believe.

However this may be, it certainly was not high water when we pushed off, and yet our nearest way was to go in the boat. Our two men tugged at the oars, and we got along very well, only that the water being very shallow, we occasionally stuck for a few moments, when the water would splash over us (the wind being high) in a style that was rather disagreeable, especially to my friend.

We at length landed at the island, and, having agreed with our boatmen to wait for us, we strolled off in different directions in search of sport. Going along the shore to my right, I shoved a couple of cartridges in my gun, and, keeping a good look-out for birds, I was rewarded by seeing a lot of purres flying towards me. Dropping on one knee, I awaited them, when, to my disgust, they turned and flew over the water at rather a long range. I fired and dropped a couple, which the wind soon brought to land. Hardly were they pocketed before a fresh lot appeared, taking the same direction as before. Again I dropped two or three birds. Then, as they did not seem to be floating nearer, I ran into the water and picked them up. Whilst so doing, still more birds came, and instinctively crouching down, I became very wet and uncomfortable. However, I got some more birds, having five down at once.

At last, the passage having ceased, and not seeing any signs of my friend or the boat, I determined to return. I had proceeded some little distance when I became aware that the tide was making, and almost at the same moment saw that there was a stream of water six or seven feet wide flowing between my precious person and the part of the island where my friend and the boatmen were. I could not recollect having passed any channel as I was coming along, but the stern fact was there, and after calling several times in vain, I determined to leap the obstacle. There was no danger to life if I stayed where I was, as there are some high cliffs, where anyone would be safe from harm. The risk was in jumping the stream. I have since ascertained that I had unwittingly got on another island, named, I believe, "Little Lee."

Looking carefully at the place, I saw a ledge of rock two or three feet below the water, on the other side, so I resolved to jump on the ledge rather than endeavour to get right across. Throwing my cartridge-bag well behind—it never struck me to toss it over—I sprang on to the ledge, up to the middle in water, and scrambled out on the other side. As I drew myself up I was greeted by a hearty laugh, and for the first time observed that a young man and woman had been intently watching and enjoying my proceedings.

I soon came across my friend, and we compared bags, when I turned out 13 birds, and he five or six, so that, although he

could laugh at my appearance, I had the consolation of having the heaviest bag. Feeling faint with hunger, I called at a house, the only one on the island, and endeavoured to purchase some refreshment. I was, however, compelled to do without anything, as the people refused to let me have even a crust. I had recourse to my whisky flask, but that did not improve matters, so we got in the boat, and were soon back at Hoylake, where we got something to eat, and then felt all right. We came away the same evening, having, on the whole, enjoyed ourselves very much.

Early the following September, my friend Heywood and self set off for Cleethorpes for a few days' out. The long journey would have been very tedious but for the company of some relations of mine of the gentler sex, whose conversation and attention to our creature comforts in the way of sandwiches, &c., pleasantly beguiled the time. Soon after noon we arrived, and having deposited our luggage, we went for a tramp along the shore, going towards the mouth of the Humber.

It was a very hot day, and before we had cleared the parties of ladies and children, who were paddling about in the water with bare feet, we felt rather tired. However, after a couple of long miles, we arrived at a very likely-looking marsh, and soon we were in the midst of it. A sandpiper rose, and I dropped it in a small pool. I tried to retrieve the bird, and it dived and swam about under water in a most amusing manner. When my companion came up the performance was repeated until, having seen enough, it was killed and pocketed.

Then we ran about a great deal, and fired several shots to no purpose. Going over the marsh again, I succeeded in bagging four more sandpipers in four successive shots, all out of a large creek. Heywood had a distant shot at a wood-pigeon, which went away hard hit. The pipers were too quick for him, so that his sport was even poorer than mine.

Being very thirsty, we cast about for some water, and at last, seeing a building across the marsh, we set out for it. It was a very long way off, but on arriving we discovered a pump near a sheep-washing pool, and soon were enjoying the deliciously cool water. As we were coming away I turned back for another drink, when Heywood suggested I had better bring the pump along with me.

We turned out at a very early hour the next morning, and walked down to the marsh again, where I got a sandpiper and a purre.

Concealed behind a stranded boat, I had several shots at curlews, but it was no use. I sat down and smoked my pipe, meanwhile hearing Heywood fire several times. At length he turned up, and having shot at small flocks, he had managed to get a few birds. After breakfast we took a boat, directing the

man to endeavour to reach some haven, I forget the name of it, but, having grounded on the way, it was impossible to do it. Taking advantage of the stoppage, we had a very enjoyable bath, the water being quite warm. Here I had a double shot at an oyster catcher, which I missed. I rather fancy it was while I was in natural costume. Whether or not, it would not be the first time.

At any rate, having resumed our garments, and seeing a very large sandbank, literally covered with birds, we rolled our trousers up, and tried to stalk them. But it was useless. Having at last got afloat, we resolved to return, and, passing Cleethorpes, proceeded up the Humber. I was successful in killing a couple of lesser terns, and as they were the first of that variety I had ever obtained, I was duly elated. My stuffer made a very good job of them, but one was, unfortunately, destroyed by my cat.

I may mention that, having got my trousers wet over the knees, they would not stop rolled up, but dropped down. I took no further notice of them, and was frequently wading in the water to the middle of the thigh. I fired at a great black-backed gull, which got away, and Heywood missed a teal. A purre, which I got, completed my bag, and as we were landing from the boat at dusk I finished with a glorious miss at some curlews.

Next morning I went out alone, and hiding behind the boat we had been out in the day before, I managed to shoot a solitary gull, and another bird. In the afternoon we returned home not over-pleased with our out. I am convinced that, had we gone the first week in August, or when a hard frost had tamed the birds, we might have done much better.

When near the birds on the sandbank, had we possessed the rifles with which some very innocent people suppose birds are shot, we might possibly have got an odd bird or so by firing a ball among the lot. This practice, however, is condemned by all the best authorities on the ground of scaring the birds uselessly, as unless they should be lying very close together, the chances are much against any being stopped.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING AT CONWAY (1880).

On the 2nd of August, 1880, I met my friends, Renshaw and Heywood, at the station, en route for Conway. We had long waited for the day, and had made every preparation for having a good time of it. Our weapons were a 12-bore central, a 12-bore pin, and a 16-bore muzzle-loader—double guns, of course, so as there was no borrowing of ammunition from each other; we all carried a good supply. H. dispensed with a shot-pouch, and used tallow-shot cartridges. The five or six hours' railway journey passed over very pleasantly, though two of us had been there several times before. The very enticing look of the shore, with numerous large birds gravely walking about, always raises one's anticipations to the highest pitch.

Arrived at Llandudno Junction, we left the train and boarded a ramshackle kind of conveyance, which, however, soon transferred us to our lodgings, the Castle View Inn, Deganwy. We got our weapons together, and were soon outside something to eat and the inn as well. On the shore were a lot of ring dotterels feeding in fancied security. Their enjoyment was, however, of short duration, as R. and self bagged a couple each. The birds were duly baptised, they being the first blood of the season.

After this, we took a boat, and went under the railway bridge, a short distance up the river, when we landed and dismissed the boatmen. We had a long and arduous stalk after a heron (of which species we saw plenty), but it was no use. In fact, all the birds, and there were large numbers, were very wild. R. only got a bird—a lapwing.

Feeling warm and tired, we were glad to rest in the shade of a smack lying high and dry, when we indulged in a smoke and drink. Having recovered from our exertions, we got up to return, when we saw a large bird flying towards us. All crouched till it was nicely in range, when we simultaneously saluted it with a barrel each, and it dropped like a stone. It was a very fine cormorant, and we each and all regretted that the other two fellows had fired. However, we picked it up, and duly admired its size. We noticed that its throat felt very hard, and I began to air my knowledge of natural history by assuring my companions that the inside of the cormorant's throat was of the toughness of leather as a protection from the spines of fish swallowed for food. Having succeeded in convincing my friends of the truth of my theory, I slung the bird over my shoulder,

when, behold, it disgorged a flounder the breadth of one's hand! Its throat was now limp enough, and there was a hearty laugh at my expense.

We crossed the railway and arrived at our lodgings in due course. Whilst supper was preparing, H. went out, and soon returned with a rabbit he had bagged. We were out very early the next morning, and walked up the bank. I got two rooks, and that was all we did.

After breakfast we engaged a boat, from which we endeavoured to do some kebbing for flounders. However, as all we caught was a couple of crabs, we soon gave it up. We saw immense flocks of various kinds of birds, mostly out of range. R. dropped a rook, and I shot a common tern; then we agreed to land, and try to stalk some of the flocks. I got down on my stomach on the sandbank, and crawled towards a lot of black-backed gulls. When I was about 40 yards off they rose; I got on my knees, singled out a couple of the biggest, and dropped them right and left. They fell in the water, and how to get them was the question, as they were rapidly drifting away from the shore. In half a minute I was minus boots, socks, and unmentionables, and after them in the water. But it was no use; it was too deep, and I had to leave them; or, rather, they left me. They would have made a grand pair stuffed.

Resuming my garments, I proceeded to the boat, getting an odd stint by the way. We took to the boat again, and did a lot of shooting, but very little killing. I joined H. at a curlew which we picked up. He also secured an oyster-catcher at an enormous distance. I think the tallow cartridge did it; but the recoil of his gun was something awful, his arm was quite discoloured. In the afternoon we went after some rabbits, when I bagged two, and the others one each.

The way I went about it was as follows:—It was a blazing hot day, and I sat down on a slightly elevated part of the ground at some distance from my companions, charged my gun, placed it carefully by my side, got out my glass, focussed it, and laid it near the gun, pulled out a briar-root pipe, lit it, and again picked up the glass and carefully surveyed the ground, which was completely covered with gorse, until I could see the ears of a rabbit standing up like withered leaves. Then I would keep my eyes on the spot while I got the gun up, aimed a little below the ears, and there would be a bunny the less.

Once on the same ground I picked up two rabbits after a shot, one of which, being only wounded, in my haste to gather it, I fell over, and got a lot of spines from the gorse imbedded in my hand. It was several days before I succeeded in extracting them all.

At three the following morning we took a long walk up the river bank, keeping close to the railway line. H. shot a green plover, while R. and self bagged a couple of birds each.

Afternoon, near the railway bridge, R. got a curlew and I a sandpiper or two. In the evening we took our stand at the foot of the railway embankment, when scores of curlews flew over, but all at a great height. We fired many shots, but did not get anything.

I am convinced that if we had been using four-bores instead of twelves we could have done very well indeed. Just as we were giving up, R. said he had seen a curlew drop on the other side as if killed. We, however, went into Conway for some refreshment, paying a trifle for crossing the suspension bridge, but on our return R. said he would look for the curlew. He accordingly jumped over the wall, and very soon found the bird, much to my surprise, as it was now quite dark, being dusk when we shot it.

The next day we went to the same place, when the curlews came over on their return journey, this time flying up the river. I shot a curlew, which a man retrieved for 6d., and a rook or two, and a curlew dropped to joint shot of R. and self. As it fell he called out (not having seen I had fired), "I've shot a curlew, and blown its head off." Whether it was the result of the two barrels or whether it was beheaded by the telegraph wires we could not tell, but without a head it certainly was! R. shot a couple more birds, and H. and self brought a kittiwake down between us.

Afternoon we went in a boat and R. got three birds, while I did not get anything. We were out again in the evening, when I shot a ring plover and H. a rabbit. We were on the embankment for a short time, but owing to a slight mischance occurring to R., we deemed it advisable to give up for the night.

The next day, being our last, we were pretty early at the flighting-point. I had a great desire to get a cormorant to my own gun, and I was at length successful. R. had dropped a bird on the marsh, and had gone a long way round to retrieve it, when I saw a couple of cormorants flying towards me. I crouched behind the wall, and as the birds passed over I aimed at the first, when the second gradually closed its wings, gracefully dropped on the marsh, and commenced to run. How to get it was the difficulty, when, fortunately, a man, pulling up the river in a small boat, observed my dilemma. He rowed to the side, anchored, and set off in pursuit, armed with a boat-hook. After a lot of trouble, he managed to secure it, as well as the bird shot by R. I went to the foot of the embankment to meet him, and by each placing one of our feet on a stone, he managed to pass

the cormorant to me. I held it by the neck, as it was still alive and very vicious. Tossing the man a piece of silver, he departed well satisfied.

R., now seeing his bird was retrieved, came towards the creek, and I pointed out to him to follow in the man's footsteps. He did so, and managed very well until he got to the water, when, by some chance, he got one foot fast, then the other, and in endeavouring to loose them sat down with a flop in the soft mud. Oh, how I laughed, and two or three navvies passing along the line to their employment joined in the chorus. It completely doubled us up. R., however, did not seem to appreciate the ludicrousness of his situation. His language was a trifle elevated, and when he did get on his feet again he vowed I had purposely decoyed him to the spot. He had to go at least a mile and a half before he could cross the creek. Frequently he stooped and applied his knife as a scraper to his garments.

When I met him he would scarcely speak, but being one of the best-tempered fellows I know, he soon saw the affair in its true light, and enjoyed it as much as his wet clothes would allow him.

After breakfast we went into Conway, and, I am sorry to say, neglected to examine the fine old castle. We called at an inn for refreshment, and after sitting awhile proceeded to engage a boatman to row us up the Conway. We went up the river several miles, and saw a great number of birds, herons, curlews, and plover, but all out of range for our guns. I shot a couple of sandpipers only, and R. got an odd bird. Coming back it rained hard, and we were soon wet through. We smoked and liquored up, and endured it.

After a good wash, R. and self left by the 5 15 train for home, H. staying a few days longer. I must not forget to mention that I kept the cormorant alive, wishing to see if it could be tamed, and accordingly muzzled it with a cartridge case, placing it under the seat.

While the train was stopped at Chester, we got out to stretch our legs, and had walked to the other end of the platform when we heard a series of loud shrieks issuing from one of the carriages. We turned round, and hastened back, when we saw a knot of people gathered round our carriage. It appeared the cormorant had got his muzzle off, and attacked the skirts of a lady who was taking her seat. She sprang out, but the bird maintained its hold, shaking her dress as a terrier would a rat. With many apologies, we secured it afresh, and, after a long journey, arrived home without further incident.

The bird was so filthy in its habits that next day I killed it, and had it and one of the curlews preserved.

To those who possess good large-bore guns I can heartily recommend Conway, but 12-bores are of very little use. I certainly never saw so many curlews at any other place, before or since. The chief drawback is the necessity of either hiring a boat or crossing the railway before you can get on the marsh. A collapsible boat would be just the thing.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1881).

In the summer of this year (having removed to Preston at the end of August, 1880), I personally built a small canoe on the model of the Poole canoe, shown and described in "Hawker on Shooting," and similar in dimensions, viz., 12ft. long, 3ft. 7in. beam, and 11in. deep. Following the directions in Mr. Clement's book, "Modern Wildfowling," I decked her over, leaving an opening or cockpit in the centre 4ft. by 2ft. (I afterwards lengthened it to 6ft.), with a 3in. combing all round. She was fastened all throughout either by copper nails or brass screws. The bottom was three pine boards, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick, the centre piece of wood overlapping the other two and forming, as it were, a broad, shallow keel. I gave everything a coat of red lead, but treated the bottom with black varnish; all the rest was painted with white lead, containing just a shade of lamp black, which made it a light lead colour. She was fitted, in addition, with a small sprit sail.

My friend, Luke Renshaw, of Manchester, having promised to join me, duly turned up on the 31st July with a cab load of guns and other sundries. Indulging in pleasant anticipations of sport, it was 1 a.m. on the 1st before we turned in. At 3.45 we were down at the river, unfortunately, an hour too late, as we found the boat high and dry in the dock with a lot of other craft lying in front of her. Taking off our coats, we set to work with a will, and after a deal of labour (she weighed about 3cwt., and was sadly too heavy) managed to launch her over the wall. My dog, of course, instead of quietly leaping into the boat, preferred swimming, so that when we did take him aboard the shaking he gave himself was as good as a shower bath to us. We arranged our armament, which consisted of two double central-fire 12-bores, and a single central-fire full-choked 8-bore, with plenty of cartridges, and then I pulled gently down stream for a while, but hearing a lot of shooting I got impatient, and landed on the south bank.

After a miss or two I dropped a sandpiper and a tern or sea swallow. Then Renshaw got a bird from the boat. Much to my annoyance, business prevented me going any further, so I re-entered the boat and came ashore on the north side.

Wishing my friend good luck, I proceeded up the brook, and soon got another piper, which was dropped in the midst of its gyrations, greatly to the admiration of a young man who was pottering about with a single muzzle-loader. After Dash had

retrieved the bird, my new companion proposed to purchase it (the bird, not the dog), as he had not killed anything, so I sold it to him for luck, and proceeded home very much amused at the nature of the transaction. And it must have been a lucky bird to the verdant shooter, as a few evenings after I heard he had been boasting what a lot of ducks he had killed on the first.

To return to my friend. In the afternoon I met him coming up under sail, and he took me aboard. As the wind dropped, and it was nearly high water, I took the oars, and whilst rowing R. dropped a bird very nicely, and we picked it up. He had only got five in all, and attributed it to our being so late in the morning, and the great number of shooters out.

The next morning we went down four of five miles in the canoe, and seeing nothing else, I fired at the first couple of sandpipers which came darting along the water, when down came both; one, however, we could not recover. Then I dropped three more birds, two being very long shots. I also shot a purr, stint, or dunlin, but, the water being rather lumpy, lost it.

R., who was rather spoiled by choice between his 12-bore and 8-bore, and was undecided which to use, only shot a purr. As we were coming back with the tide, he had a long chance at a stock dove, firing both barrels of his 12-bore, but with no visible result, when I came to the rescue with the 8-bore, and killed—a good distance it was by that time. Arriving at the Quay, we mopped out the boat, proceeded home, got something to eat, and then felt all right.

In the evening we decided to set out with dawn on the following morning, and, to prevent oversleeping, instead of going to bed, sat up smoking and talking. In the small hours of the morning, however, it began to rain hard, and as there was no sign of abatement at five o'clock, we gave it up and went to bed.

Renshaw and I have had some queer experiences after sport; fun we have managed, but the sport has not been very great, though I do not think it entirely our fault. I believe that our next night's work was the stiffest of all.

We set out in the evening, the rain having cleared away, and, dropping down the river as soon as the tide began to ebb, kept on the look-out for sport. Whilst intently looking down the river, a few ducks came over, but as we were gazing at something else, we did not observe them until too late to fire, although they must have passed us in very nice range. R. dropped a gull and a sandpiper, and I also got one of the latter. Sandpipers are pretty plentiful in August and September, but I do not remember seeing much of them after. I think they must change their location. As they are not unlike the jacksnipe in flight, and

about the same size, they afford very nice sport at times. I have seen them dive and either run or swim under water when wounded. They are fair eating.

It was now getting dark, so we anchored the boat and walked nearly a mile to Lea Gate Inn, where we had some food. We took the precaution to obtain an additional supply of rum, and then, lighting a cigar each, cheerfully "paved our way" down to the boat. It was quite dark, so we naturally soon made a mess of ourselves in crossing the marsh. There was no fear we should get lost; we had only to keep the brook on the right hand. But as there are at least three tributary sluices to be crossed, no wonder we were awfully dirty about the legs ere we reached the canoe. We boarded her, and resolved to get lower down before turning in. There was no moon, and R.'s cigar shone out to me like a railway signal. By and bye, he became musical, and gave me a song. I never even suspected before that he had such talent. Then I responded, but as rowing and singing do not go very well together (at least with self) my pronunciation was rather disjointed.

We were about anchoring for the night when it began to blow a little, so I pulled to the weather side of the river. I happened to be sitting on the deck (being too careless to get in the cockpit for that short distance) when a small wave washed over, rendering me very wet and uncomfortable astern. We anchored, had another cigar, and a final pull at the rum bottle, and then lay down head to feet in the cockpit.

We were certainly "cribbed and confined," though by no means cabined, in that 4ft. by 2ft. hole, and we could not get our shoulders under the deck consequently—but it is really useless, the situation can be better imagined than described, and yet, as Captain Lacy says, "better described than felt," so I will leave it, merely stating that it began to rain, and the sail (our "bed cover") not being quite long enough, there was a continual pulling at each end as one or the other became uncovered. R. said we should remember it as being jolly in future years. I confess it does not seem so bad now. Unable to endure it any longer, we arose at twenty minutes to two on the Thursday morning, and pulled to the end of the bank.

When the day broke, we saw a lot of birds, and, landing, we beat several creeks, but in vain. Returning to the boat, I shot a large gull with the 8-bore, and a purre and sandpiper with my 12-bore. We set off back as soon as ever the tide made, mopped the boat out, and got home to breakfast at half-past seven a.m. We both felt as if we had been the recipients of a sound thrashing, but it passed off during the day, and we experienced no further ill-effects.

The following day Renshaw went out alone in the boat at half-past six in the morning. I met him at dusk. He was quite tired, and had only got two birds. On the Saturday we were out for a short time, when he obtained another bird, but I got nothing. On taking his departure he said he had enjoyed himself very much, and promised to visit me again next season, if not before.

A few weeks after, very early in the morning, I launched the canoe, and, taking the dog, proceeded to pull down the river to meet the tide. Before long I dropped a ring dotterel or ring plover, which was successfully bagged. Then I landed, and beat a sluice very carefully. I was rewarded by seeing a lapwing rise from behind a patch of mud, where it had evidently been quietly feeding. Though rather far off, I managed to drop it, but not quite dead. The dog, however, although only a young one (a present from my friend), retrieved it very nicely, and I turned back and deposited it in a box, which I used as a seat in the canoe. Dash watched me very narrowly. I went on, but suddenly missed the dog, and, looking round, saw him in the distance racing after me with the bird in his mouth. I put it in my pocket that time.

He must have contracted a great liking for lapwings on this occasion, as a few weeks subsequently, near the same spot, he set off in pursuit of a large congregation of them, barking and running until he was tired, and then lying down panting, whilst the birds shrieked and swooped over him. After awhile he was off again, and the performance repeated. I was both amused and disgusted, for he would not come away when called, and I had to leave him. I had seen a somewhat similar affair several years before, but it did not last so long. The tide soon after making, I was obliged to return, after bagging another bird, and got back in nice time for a second breakfast.

I do not believe in going out on an empty stomach in the early morning. A dry crust, with some warm milk without any spirits suits me best. In the afternoon I was again in the canoe, along with my eldest boy. There was no scarcity of birds, and, by keeping the sail up as a screen, I caught them as they passed the edge of it, dropping eight in all. I used all my ammunition, with the exception of one cartridge, which I kept in reserve in case any rare bird turned up. As there was no wind, I had to pull all the way back, arriving home at nine o'clock, being very tired with the two outs in one day.

Whilst down the river I found that I had by some means or other opened the muzzle of one of my barrels for about half an inch. Probably done by jobbing the gun into the sand when jumping ashore. Should anyone consider that the shooting of seafowl other than the orthodox ducks be not the thing, I can

assure them that few of the above birds were wasted, as I know a person who is very fond of eating them, strange as it may seem (and, in fact, does seem to me), to whom they were given. The feathers, when cured, do for stuffing pillows, &c.

The shooting itself, after the first few days, is difficult enough, and I am well satisfied when I can average a bird for every three cartridges. Towards the end of the season you don't get one for every six. I find the best sizes of shot to be 3's and 5's with a few 9's for the smaller birds, which latter are sometimes seen in immense flocks.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1882).

A couple of days before the "first" Renshaw turned up again, and, having determined to possess a craft of his own, the next day purchased a large open boat about 24ft. long, intending going down in her, but as it rained very hard we transferred all our tackle aboard our friend Buckley's decked boat the "Dart."

After supper we went down to embark for the morning tide. Previous to going aboard, we liquored up with a lot of acquaintances bound on a similar errand to ourselves, and as it was raining very hard indeed, our stay at the inn was somewhat protracted. On leaving R. had secured half-a-dozen bottles of beer, but missed two before we got on the boat. Our companions had abstracted them, and when the empty bottles were found, with their necks knocked off, there was a good bit of chaff, mixed with some grumbling, on the subject.

We had engaged a man to help us, and, having lighted a fire in the boat's cabin, endeavoured to go to sleep. This, however, was impossible, as the rain dripped through the cabin top, wetting our berths, and, in addition, we were tormented by a couple of fellows from a neighbouring boat, who twice pulled across in their punt, notwithstanding the heavy rain, to beg a drink of whisky. Before the second visit was ended we hid our bottle, and thus got rid of our visitors.

For some time we had a little peace, and sat smoking our pipes and drying our garments. Then it began to blow hard, and we were pitched about most unmercifully, and the rain, wind, and tide caused the river to rise so high that twice we had to turn out and shove the bowsprit off the quay wall, lest it should get snapped off when the water dropped. The canoe, which was secured astern, occasionally made the most frantic efforts to come aboard, as if attracted by the bright fire and apparent comfort. We kept pushing her off, but it was exactly like thrusting a dog away when it is determined to get on your knees.

At half-past two a.m. we got up the sails with a couple of reefs in, and made a start against a strong head wind, but as the boat was short of ballast, she refused to obey her helm when we endeavoured to come about, and on each occasion ran into the wall. We, therefore, gave it up, and turned in again, and then managed to get a little sleep.

When day broke the wind and water had both dropped considerably, and I stood in the cockpit loaded and ready. Presently a

lot of birds made their appearance, and I dropped three in succession, two of which I picked up in the canoe. Then I crossed the river (leaving my companions, who declined to turn out), shot five more birds, came back, and added another from the quay wall as I went home to breakfast. After noon I went out again, and sailed about in the canoe, when I shot two sandpipers and a gull. R. shot a couple of gulls and a sandpiper. We only picked up one of the birds, however, as the water was so rough, and we did not care to venture across.

Next day we engaged a fresh man to accompany us in R.'s new purchase, and accordingly, on the morning after, self and a clerical friend roused R. from his slumbers on the Dart at four o'clock. The "captain" turned up soon after, and we set out in the new boat, towing the canoe astern. I shot a rook and a couple of sandpipers, and after a pleasant sail against a stiff breeze, we arrived at our destination.

Having business to attend, I at once set out to walk home. I dropped three birds along the pool, but was unable to get them. Getting on the highway, I partook of some refreshment at an inn, and then made for the river again. I stalked three large gulls as they were basking in a pool, and got the lot. I believe they were young herring gulls. Just before leaving the river side I dropped another bird, but did not get it, as it floated away out of reach. I concluded my out by arriving home at 9 30 a.m.

The others got back with the tide at one p.m., having had poor sport, Renshaw getting only about half-a-dozen purrees. The captain afterwards told me he was horrified at the way in which R. and his companion (the latter a prize oarsman) had been sailing in the canoe in very rough water.

A week or so after, about half-past four in the morning, I launched the canoe and proceeded to pull down the river with the intention of taking a few shots and coming back with the flood in the course of three or four hours. I had got about a couple of miles from my starting point, when I was hailed by an acquaintance on the bank, who was standing waiting for birds. As he expressed a desire to accompany me, I accommodated him with a seat in the stern, and pulled lower down the river.

Hearing some birds on the south bank, my companion volunteered to land and try to stalk them. Accordingly I put him ashore, and at the same moment caught a glimpse of a curlew flying over the marsh on the other side. Eventually it settled near a creek. Pulling across, I gently stepped ashore and planted the anchor in the sand. Then I waded up the creek, stooping so as not to let anything appear above the surface of the marsh. Having in this manner got to a turn in the creek

leading away from the bird, I cautiously peeped through a tuft of coarse grass and saw the curlew's head appearing over another tuft. It was rather a long shot, and, by the way, its head turned, was quite on the "qui vive"; so I gently thrust the gun over the bank, aimed rather low, and fired. I jumped up, and at the same moment another curlew rose, but quite out of range. Gathering the dead bird, I was soon in the canoe, and my companion, making his appearance, I took him aboard. He had never fired.

As we were now on our way a solitary purre came skimming up the river, first on one side and then on the other. It finally, in passing, gave me a chance. I dropped it, and with the other barrel secured another passing bird. We had a few more shots, all misses, with the exception of a lapwing, which I got, when we decided to land, and thereupon did so on the north side.

We saw an immense congregation of lapwings, and separated, endeavouring to get them between us, but they were too wary for us. As my companion was now some distance off, and feeling rather tired, I sat down in the dry bed of a creek to wait while he came up. A few birds were flying in the distance, when suddenly one came right over me, and I shot it. It fell a few yards in front, and I was pleased to find it was another curlew, and certainly I was rather astonished at its tameness. My comrade came soon after, and, having wounded a large gull, we crossed the river in chase of it, as it had disappeared on that side, so he said. Going up the creek, I saw a large bird standing in some shallow water, so I crawled as near as I could, and then stood up to fire. It never stirred, so I went up to it, and found it was a wounded bird, probably my friend's.

The tide now making, we embarked. Our return journey was a blank as regards sport, and we arrived at the quay before nine a.m., having had very good sport for the short time out.

During the Guild Week Renshaw and I were on the river almost every day. On the Monday, while in the canoe for a few hours, I got a few pures and a lapwing; but on the following day we set out for a longer excursion. Launching the canoe at six a.m., we proceeded leisurely to pull down the river. We had not got very far before a drizzling rain set in, and lasted all the forenoon. As we got lower down the stream, we saw plenty of birds, but all very wild. My friend, however, succeeded in bagging one or two with the 8-bore. Near the bank we saw a lot of gulls, with a single curlew in their midst. Perceiving they were about to rise, I took aim at the curlew and fired. It rolled over, as also did one of the gulls. As I ran up, the curlew rose, and I fired at it, but it got away, evidently very hard struck. All I got, therefore, much to my disappointment, was the gull.

The rain was still coming down when I again entered the boat. We met a boat containing a couple of men, who had been "eel bobbing." They had had a little sport, but on account of the rain were returning, having a good westerly breeze to help them against the stream. We decided to stop, and, crossing to the north side, endeavoured to find some shelter behind the bank. We were fortunate in discovering a new cattle shed, where we sat down and partook of some refreshment, also indulging in a smoke and drink. Occasionally we went to the top of the bank to look for birds, and whilst there my friend called out to me to mark four birds crossing the river and flying towards us. They gave us a good chance, and, firing at the first bird, I dropped it and the second also. I did not fire my other barrel. They fell in a potato field, where, after great difficulty, we managed to find one of them. It was a snipe, and being winged, only betrayed itself by fluttering on the ground. We could not find the other bird.

The wind rising and the rain abating a little, I went to the boat, and was hoisting the sail when a skein of about forty ducks passed overhead. Dropping the sheet, and letting them have a barrel of No. 3's down came one, making a splash a yard high. I pulled towards where I thought it was floating, but having unavoidably lost time in taking down the sail, and the water being rather lumpy, I lost it. In vain I stood up and looked around. The instant I turned to windward (down stream) the rain covered my glasses, so at last I had to give it up.

Renshaw now came from his shelter, and as it still rained, we determined not to wait for the tide, but to sail home at once, the wind being strongly in our favour. We got along slowly in consequence of the fresh water coming down stream, and being tired of sitting still, I got out and tried two or three creeks for birds. I was fortunate enough to get a fine curlew, which rose from one of the sluices, and tried hard to get away, but came down with a broken wing. This, with another bird, finished our sport, and we arrived home very wet and very hungry. Our bag was nothing wonderful, as I only got five birds and R. three. We fired a good many shots, though, at long range.

On the Thursday, we engaged a person to take us out in his decked boat, trawling and shooting. We set off in good time, but, unfortunately, grounded within a couple of a hundred yards of deep water. This was very unfortunate, as it completely spoiled our sport. We resolved to dine as soon as we found we were stuck fast, and accordingly made coffee and toasted some cheese. The latter dish was anything but a success, as we let it fall on the fire, and when recovered its appearance was by no means appetising. It got demolished, though.

It being now quite dry all round us, we left the boat and began to gather cockles. There were a good many fine ones about. We got several shots at divers, but all too far away to be effective. We only managed to get a rook and four or five purrees. When the tide made we set off back, and putting out our trawl, got a few fish, but nothing worth mentioning. Picking up the punt we had left moored near Lytham Pier, we sailed up the river, but the breeze dropping we got out the sweeps, and pulled home.

The following morning I went out for a short time alone in the canoe, and shot four birds.

On the Saturday, an uncle and a couple of cousins came to see me. They were particularly anxious to go in the canoe, so I took them. Only one bird was got, but I had several shots at stockdoves. A laughable incident occurred. Whilst one cousin was rowing he "caught a crab," the result was that his brother, who was sat upon the deck astern smoking his pipe and examining my bird, fell overboard. He was up instantly—swimming, his hat on his head, his pipe in his mouth, and bird in his fist. His first exclamation was, "Give me a light!" so it may be conceived that he had been paying attentions to a large bottle which he had insisted on towing astern. After getting him in the boat, we dragged her up stream, and meeting another boat coming in search of us, towed both together home. It was desperately hard work, and we were thankful when we had finished.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1883).

Notwithstanding we had long looked forward to the 1st of August, 1883, our sport on that occasion was very meagre. As arranged months before, my friend Renshaw duly made his appearance with his usual formidable "impedimenta." My young friend, Albert Saul, having kindly volunteered to take us down the river in his small yacht, called for us on the evening of the 31st July, and after collecting our guns, cartridges, and provisions, and partaking of a little refreshment, we got aboard and prepared to start. It did not take long to hoist the sails, and, with S. at the helm and my canoe in tow, we began to beat down stream with the ebbing tide.

Having got to what we considered a favourable spot for the morning, we dropped the sails and anchored in the middle of the river. Although we had plenty to eat, we now discovered that we had, unfortunately, neglected to bring any coals, so that when we turned in, although comfortable in other respects, we were very cold. Of course, before sleeping, we indulged in a pipe and nightcap, and felicitated ourselves upon the probable sport the morning would bring.

Just before eating our supper, R. said he could smell something disagreeable. S. suggested it was the bilge water, but on making a search he found a plate of uncooked beefsteaks green with age! Of course, the plate was emptied overboard, and cleared, when the bad odour disappeared. At half-past three in the morning, we rose, and taking our guns we gleefully inserted the cartridges whilst standing in the cockpit on the look-out.

R. used a 12-bore central fire, by Leonard and Sons, Birmingham; S., who is a very fair shot, a good 12-bore central, by W. Richards, of Preston; and I a 12-bore central, by J. Burrow, of Preston. Although a fine morning, it was so cold that our teeth chattered audibly. To get up a little circulation S. and self took the canoe and went ashore, where we separated, and soon after I saw S. fire in the distance, and a large bird come down. Then R. fired, and a bird dropped on the bank. When my turn came I missed; in fact, I had two or three shots for nothing.

Going some distance along the edge of a big creek, I, however, managed to stalk and drop a couple of pures, which were recovered by drawing them to the side with the gun barrels. Whilst picking them up a heron came flying very low over the marsh. To drop on my knees was the work of an instant. In fact, I lay with the side of my face on the ground, something like a Mussul-

man or a Parsee engaged in his devotions. But it was no use, for just as another ten yards would have brought the bird in shot, he wheeled off, and I was left lamenting.

Meanwhile, R. and S. fired several times each and, feeling curious to know the results, I hastened to the river side, when R. told me to look for his bird. I did so, and found it all right. It was a young curlew.

Soon after S. came along with three birds. We then got in the canoe and boarded the big boat. After eating a few biscuits, we again prepared for action. As I was standing in the cockpit with R. a couple of sea swallows (I wanted them for stuffing) flew over in nice range, and I got them both by a right and left. S., who was in the canoe, picked them up. Not long after, both he and R. got a couple each of the same species. I could not understand there being many, as terns are not very plentiful in this neighbourhood.

The tide now making, and S. and self having to go back, I joined the latter in the canoe, and prepared to depart. R. having expressed a desire to stay in the big boat alone, he arranged with S. to join him with the canoe on the following morning. Before we started we were visited by a couple of acquaintances who had come down in a small boat. They had done rather more than us, but I now forget what they had got. Like us, they intended to go back with the tide, and finally went in such a hurry that they left a packet of luncheon behind. As the wind was still blowing from the west, we had a fair breeze up the river, and with the small jib of the big boat we rigged up a sail for the canoe (having forgot to bring her own), and came back in grand style, getting a few shots, but doing no bagging, on the way.

The following morning I walked a few miles down the river bank, and whilst standing behind a post I saw S. coming down in the canoe to join R. He was rather astonished when I stepped forth and pulled to the side to ask for a few matches. He had got some coal, but was without firewood. I helped him to pick up a few dry pieces, and then he proceeded on his way. I could just see the boat in the distance, and wondered how R. was getting on.

I shot only a couple of purres, the last of which, however, is worth noting. It stood by the edge of a small pool, and it was so tame that it allowed me to walk within half-a-dozen yards of it, and then I had to put it up. After I had pocketed it, I took another look at the place it rose from, and found it was tenanted by a fresh-killed specimen of its own species, evidently its mate.

The next day R. and S. came back. They had had very indifferent sport, R. only bagging one bird during the day and night he was alone on the boat. He dropped some birds, which

from his isolated position he was unable to get, having neither dog nor punt. He told me he did not care to repeat his experience of lodging in a boat anchored in the centre of the stream. He was afraid he might get run down, especially as he had no lamps. However, as there is very little traffic, the danger was not so great.

Not long after I purchased a 13ft. punt, and disposed of the canoe. Towards the end of September a couple of acquaintances roused me out of bed about midnight, and then came again at four in the morning, and we set out in the boat. One of my companions had a couple of shots soon after we started, but was very unlucky, and we both fired several times at curlews and lapwings, but without success. I only managed to shoot four small birds. We sailed till we grounded opposite Lytham. As it was very warm, we all three took off our nether garments and dragged the boat back a long way. We had just crossed a small quicksand, when a team of ducks, passing over, I snatched up a single seven-bore muzzle-loader, and dropped one, but whilst pulling across for it, it managed to scuttle away, and as the tide began to make I did not follow it. We resumed our garments, my companions partook of some refreshment, and then we sailed home with a leading wind, having greatly enjoyed ourselves.

Having arranged to take my friend, George Buckley, of Oldham, down the river for a little shooting, he accordingly made his appearance on a certain day early in October, and we set out, accompanied by my son and three other persons who wished to have a short sail. It was about half-past four in the afternoon when I hoisted the sails, and we commenced to beat down the river. Our first contretemps was running the boat's nose into the river bank, caused by one of our friends letting go the jib sheet when the boat was coming about. After a deal of pushing with the oars, we got off again. Then, another passenger volunteered a song, much to B.'s disgust, who whispered sundry disparaging remarks to me. However, in the course of an hour or so, we dropped our freight to walk home, and by the time we got to the embankment it was growing dusk. As the night closed in we could hear a good many birds calling, and our hopes rose accordingly. But nothing came in our direction.

However, presently we saw a large congregation of lapwings on the left bank of the river. Cautiously we lowered the sails; I took an oar, and gently pushed the boat down stream, keeping close to the wall until we were, as near as we could judge, opposite the birds. Then we stopped, and at a whispered word both jumped up and fired at the flock. Unfortunately, whilst we were dropping down to the place, the birds had moved further inland, so that when we fired they were about 80 yards from us, and all we got

was a bird each. We were not long in landing and retrieving them. It became dark soon after, and many birds flew over our bows, but although we fired several times we did not get anything.

About eight o'clock we arrived at our destination, but had first about a quarter of a mile to tramp from the channel being low water. We had the usual ham and eggs, and, in fact, made a very hearty supper. After a glass or two we lighted a cigar, and took a short walk, after which we retired to rest.

At half-past five in the morning we were posted on the edge of the channel, the tide being out and our boat aground. We had a few hours good sport among the purres, getting over a dozen between us, single shots. It was most amusing to see the way in which they flew along the margin of the stream. When they dropped in we generally managed to secure them, by the old trick of throwing stones just beyond where they floated, thus gradually bringing them to the side. A far better plan might be arranged with a piece of string and a wood grapnel at the end; it would certainly be much more effective than the antiquated stone-throwing dodge. We saw several curlews, but all out of range. B. got a ring-dotterel—a very nice specimen. We adjourned to a late second breakfast, and the tide making about noon, as soon as the boat floated we set sail with a fair wind, and went up the river at a good rate. I killed a couple of birds in fair style, one of which we were unable to bag.

Having been told by some men who came down the same morning that they had seen five ducks knocking about very tame, we kept our eyes open. B. steered and I sat forward, when suddenly we observed the five ducks quietly swimming close to the wall. We both crouched down, and B. kept the boat in the middle of the river, so as not to alarm them. When we got within about 30 yards they rose, and I fired. One dropped, and I said, "Mine's down."

B. fired, and remarked, "So is mine." The three remaining birds flew over the boat, but the sail being in the way, my second barrel was behind. Well, there was my bird floating up stream, so we downed sail and pulled towards it, when it instantly dived. Waiting for it to rise, I gave it another charge, which settled it. I landed B., and then picked it up. As my friend's bird fell on shore, and he was a long time searching for it, I dropped the anchor and went to assist him, but there was nothing to be seen. Evidently it had crept into the water, dived, and got away.

We again embarked, but chancing to look back, we saw some men get out of a boat and run along the side; then they hastily jumped in their boat, crossed the river, and ran on the other side. We waited for them, and they told us they had been chasing a winged duck, but, not having a gun, they were unable to get it.

I believe the birds were scamp duck. At any rate, the one I got now reposes in a glass shade as a memento of the "out." I heard that a similar bird—a wounded one—was picked up five days afterwards—probably my friend's.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1884).

I turned out at half-past four on the morning of the 1st of August, 1884, and, being alone, with only a few hours to spare, I decided on having a tramp on the river bank instead of going in the boat. There were very few large birds to be seen, perhaps the guns which I heard sounding in the distance had scared them all away; at any rate none came in my direction.

After walking about a mile I came to a sandbank, which reached two-thirds of the width of the river at low water. Here I crouched at the edge of the water quietly smoking my pipe, and waiting for luck. Soon a small flock of pipers came, and a few were secured. Purres and pipers could now be heard and seen on all sides, and for a while I had very good sport. Altogether 16 were dropped, but six were lost owing to falling too far in the water. It was not very easy work getting the birds, and I had a good deal of running about, which made me feel uncomfortably warm. Time being up, I had to return home. I could have done well if the whole day had been at my disposal.

The next morning I was out at the same time, but walked lower down to another bank. Again a similar programme was gone through, the birds coming up the river singly and in small flocks. One bunch, which were on a small patch of sand, I fired at sitting, and killed seven. I knew if I put them up they would scatter and drop in the water, but as it was I found myself not much better off, for the sand would not bear my weight.

I had turned away in disgust when three little boys came up, and after watching me well away, one of them, taking off his clogs, got all the lot. The lad was making off with his prize when I came back and claimed them, much to his dismay. However, I duly rewarded him, and proceeded onwards.

Half a mile further on a single bird came flying up the river, but having shot almost as many as I cared about, and cartridges getting scarcer, I had resolved not to fire unless I got particularly nice chances, so although the bird was in range I waited for it to get nearer. Just as the gun was raised it dashed across the water, and was missed, as deserved. It was a kingfisher. Wouldn't I have fired sooner if I had known!

I shot a couple more birds, which fell in the water, and as a man in a boat hove in sight I hailed him, and he picked them up, and me as well. Having a fair wind and a couple of big sails, we were not long in arriving at the quay. I dropped a gull and a

couple of purres on the way. The total was 23 birds, of which 20 were brought home, thus only losing three, thanks to the boat.

The next time I was out I took my own boat, and was accompanied by my brother Edwin and my friend Moorcroft. Waiting for the latter, it was half-past six before we pushed off. We did not get very far down before we grounded, and my friend, armed with a seven-bore muzzle-loader, elected to take a walk on the south bank, but I stuck to the boat. Whilst he was hiding behind a "stoop" I managed to drop a couple of birds right and left, at which I was rather elated, as they were a good distance off. I had several shots at purres, getting in all half a dozen. I also picked up a common sandpiper. My friend got five birds.

About half-past ten the flood came, and as I was suffering severely from neuralgia, we decided to turn back in preference to staying until the next tide. Accordingly, we hoisted the sail, and soon got home. As we were less than five hours on the water, and at the worst part of it, I do not think our bag of 14 birds a bad one. But for my indisposition, we should doubtless have had a good day of it.

Not having a kingfisher in my collection, I determined to try for the one I had missed, or any other that I might come across. I therefore made several journeys specially for that purpose, and at last got a long shot at one. It appeared touched, and I marked it down. Coming to the place it got up, and just as I pulled trigger darted behind some mud and disappeared. I searched for a long time, and was giving it up, when I saw it under a turf in a small drain. Creeping up, I dashed my hat over it and captured it alive. It was a very good bird, and the stuffer made a capital job of it.

A few weeks after I got a green sandpiper, which I also had preserved, as it is rather a rare bird. The green sandpiper is larger than the common one, and when fresh killed there is a slight shade of green on the rather long legs. They are very like a common snipe in shape, size, habits, and flight, but are whiter in plumage and not so pretty.

Towards the end of September my brother John and three friends, J. K. Heginbottom, H. Dawson, and E. Mills, turned up as per agreement for an expedition down the river, and I may at once say that sport was quite a secondary consideration with them. It was a very rough day, and I would have evaded going had it been possible. As, however, H. and M. had absorbed several lotions on their way from Manchester, and meant having a sail, there was no denying them. So, getting the boat ready about five in the afternoon, we started.

We beat down for a few miles, but the wind became so strong, and we shipped so much water over the bows, that we gave up

sailing, and decided to pull the remaining part of the way. At fighting time we saw the average quantity of birds, principally green plovers, but we did not get a shot.

It took all our time to manage H. and M., the latter falling nearly overboard twice. I kept to the side purposely, to be out of danger. After this we persuaded the two to tow the boat to get them out of it, and it was most amusing to watch them "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man." One does this at best, towing in the dark on the rough wall; so it may be imagined what it was like in the present case. At length, one fell over the other, and we charitably took them aboard again, considerably sobered. They insisted on singing for us, and we did not object to this, but rather enjoyed it.

It was now quite dark, and so we decided on crossing Freckleton Pool some distance further on, that we would lay up the boat, and make for our lodgings. On passing the pool we accordingly anchored, and packed all our things together preparatory to landing. We had begun stripping our foot covering, &c., when H. jumped into the water, and volunteered to carry us ashore. Not to be outdone, M., a game 'un of 55 (I am now 59!), did the same. Between the two the other three were, wonderful to relate, safely landed.

We had a long tramp over the very rough swampy ground to the Guides' House, where we had the usual ham and eggs, followed by a "crown bowl." We got to bed in good time, being well tired.

Early next morning M., D., and self went out with the intention of shooting something or other—we really did not much care what. Armed with my twelve-bore, I stealthily approached a creek, and was rewarded by seeing a kingfisher dart round a bend before I could get the gun up. I shot a few small birds, of which there were immense flocks flying about. We made for the boat to see if all was right, and discovered that one of the oars was missing. It was soon found, lying near the edge of the pool, but on the other side. By the help of the other oar we managed to get it.

While replacing both oars I heard D. laughing very loudly. Looking round, there was M. with the big gun in his hands, up to the knees in mud, whither he had gone after some birds. As there was no danger of sinking deeper we enjoyed it very much. After a deal of struggling, M. got his legs out, but minus boots and stockings. By placing the gun upon the ground and kneeling upon it, he managed to grope them up, and carrying them together in one hand they appeared to be one mass of mud. They were not his own, as after getting wet the previous evening he had borrowed a pair of old boots and socks from our host, and they were too big for him.

After this adventure we returned to the inn for breakfast, D. carrying my gun. As he was very anxious to kill something, I pointed out a small bird in a tree. He aimed very deliberately for a few moments, and goodness knows how much longer he might have stood, when bang went a gun behind him, and the bird dropped! We both turned round, and there was M., who had cleared the mud from the gun he carried, laughing heartily, and quite proud of having wiped his young companion's eye. Proceeding on, we saw plenty of purres and a few curlews and lapwings, but all out of range.

After breakfast we had a very comfortable smoke, and then went to the boat. We took off boots and rolled trousers up, and dragged her down the pool into the river. In doing so we caught a few crabs, which we tossed in the boat. There was a very strong west wind blowing, and we thought we could return home without waiting for the flood. Accordingly we hoisted the sail and started, but we grounded so frequently that it had to be given up. We walked ashore and, taking the guns, tramped on the bank. I succeeded in shooting a couple of birds after a mile walk, and H. bagged a couple also. We fired at a bottle tossed up, but without success, when my brother, who is no shot, volunteered to show us how it was done, and he actually smashed it the first time it was thrown for him.

Somehow, I never could hit anything tossed up, although I have on one occasion killed nine out of 11 redwings, rising singly from a brook one hard winter. We got back to the boat, and when the tide made the wind drove the water against the stern of our craft that we had a fan of spray flying over us, and had to retreat forward until the boat floated. Soon we were under weigh, and went up the river in gallant style, my brother at the helm. I had only one shot on the way. There were several birds flying up with the tide, and, as M. wanted a kittiwake I kept a sharp look-out. At length, getting a shot at one, it went away apparently untouched. Observing, however, that it gave a sort of quiver just as it disappeared over the bank, I landed, and picked it up quite dead. It was in very good feather, and M. got it nicely set up, and was quite proud of it. Without further incident we arrived at the dock, and soon were enjoying a good meal.

Afterwards H. did a hornpipe to my scraping on the violin (since then I have made 24 fiddles and repaired very many more), and was so satisfied, either with my performance or his own, that he made me a present of a duck which he had bought in order not to go home empty-handed. I accompanied my friends to the station, and we parted with mutual expressions of goodwill and hopes of many a similar excursion.

I heard afterwards that as M.'s daughter was brushing his overcoat the following day a crab crawled out of one of his pockets,

and began to circumambulate the table. She was so astonished that she rushed out of the room for assistance, which being at once forthcoming, the strange reptile was captured.

Now, the sport we had was very poor indeed. Still, as I intimated at the commencement, my friends did not care much so that they had a good "out," which we had. There was plenty of fresh air and new scenery to some of the party, and to myself there was a remote hope that I might get something.

Going down in the evening, the guns were placed carefully aside, as I did not think it right to endeavour to use them under the circumstances. I really think the difficulty of getting anything enhances its value.

For instance, suppose a man to go out and shoot a score of birds sitting, would he experience half the pleasure of another who only killed four or five on the wing? I am sure not. The pleasure surely consists in overcoming the difficulties.

My friend, the late Mr. Thomas Bazley Hall, wrote me at the time, as follows:—

"I was glad to see by the paper that you are still alive and kicking (and shooting). You are still at your old game. Ducks, plovers, and any kind of sea bird seem to have a fascination for you, though I could never quite see it myself. It seems to me cold, wet work, but, after all, 'chacun à son gout.' " He further says, "Last year we had a grand day at the rabbits amongst some gorse in the park, and slaughtered about 200. The first hour we killed 140, when I gave up disgusted, and went off with a keeper to try for some pheasants. I managed three or four brace, and three brace of partridges that got up promiscuous like." I think the last quotation sufficiently demonstrates what I have been attempting to argue.

LANDRAIL CALLING; SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE
RIBBLE (1885).

The following sketch will demonstrate the usefulness of a simple little instrument which any shooter can make for himself. For many years I had had a desire to shoot a landrail, but they were rather rare in the district I was residing in. Other birds were rare as well, and I have been told I contributed to the general scarceness.

I remember going every evening for a week endeavouring to shoot a corncrake, but, somehow or other, never could get a shot. Once I was pretty near it, but a tremendous clap of thunder and a pouring shower of rain effectually scared both myself and the bird. I began to think that even the very elements were enlisted against me, and ceased to try for such game as landrails. I recollect I spoiled the teeth of a good tenon saw scraping a steel over it on one occasion.

Now, as there is a fair sprinkling of them in this neighbourhood, although only in the breeding season, the dormant desire revived, and having obtained the requisite permission (the birds not being in the schedule to the present Wild Birds Act), I made a new call, and taking the gun tried again. Still without success.

However, after an interval of a few years, walking with a friend one Sunday evening towards the end of April, I observed a bird running across the footpath. We both pursued it, and frequently getting within a dozen yards discovered it was one of the coveted birds. Had it not been Sunday I would have gone for the gun there and then. Early on the Monday and Tuesday mornings following I was at the place, but though the bird could be heard calling, that was all.

Wednesday morning dawned, or rather it had not dawned, when I arose from an uneasy slumber, and, again impelled this time by my good genius, sallied forth armed with gun and call. It was a lovely spring morning, and the walk in the cool fresh air, laden with the odour of awakening nature, was most enjoyable.

No sooner was the gate opened leading to the field it haunted than the welcome "Crake, crake," resounded from the grass, and not far off, either. Having charged the gun with a couple of cartridges loaded with 8's shot, I got down by the side of the hedge, and, pulling out the wooden rattle, rubbed it along the side of my thigh. Instantly the bird responded, and at the same moment ran out from the hedge about twenty yards higher up with

its neck outstretched and eyes peering out inquisitively. Before I could raise the gun it had seen me and gone back again. I got up and walked past the place, beating the fence well, but could see nothing.

Feeling much disappointed, I went back to my old place, and, kneeling on some dry leaves, called again. The bird at once answered from the same spot, and trotted forth to see what was the matter. I do not think it ever knew, for I instantly pressed the trigger, despatching an ounce and an eighth of shot to its address, and "rallus" was no more.

I rushed to seize it like a Red Indian would to raise his first scalp, and am afraid the yell of triumph which I uttered would have done the said Indian's lungs no discredit. With what pleasure I examined it, stroking its smooth plumage and noting the conformation of its long shanks those who, like myself, combine a little of the naturalist with the sportsman, can only tell.

Professor Wilson, in "The Recreations of Christopher North," describing his feelings on shooting a heron, and again a curlew, expresses the sensation in far more graphic language than I can command. A few mornings subsequently I was successful in obtaining another specimen, my "modus operandi" being similar.

Of course, the first bird was preserved.

I will now attempt to describe the "call," and how to make it. Take a piece of hard wood, about eight inches long, two inches wide, and three-quarters deep, at one end of which cut a slot down the centre, two inches long and a good inch wide. Then take a piece of boxwood, cut out a wheel two inches in diameter and one inch wide, so as to work easily in the slot. The grain of the wood must run through from side to side, so as to insure equal wearing, as well as for ease in cutting the teeth. To make these latter, set out the wheel in sixteen parts by the aid of a pair of compasses, and then, fixing it in a vice, proceed to saw or file out the teeth.

Next bore a small hole, one-quarter inch diameter, through the wheel and through the slot, and put the wheel in with a hard wood axle; then take a flat piece of boxwood, a good inch wide, and full one-eighth thick, reaching from the end of the handle to nearly the centre of the wheel. At the "handle" end, which may be shaved down at the sides so as to make it an inch square with the corners taken off, fasten down this flat piece with two screws.

The screw nearest the wheel must be left so that it can be tightened or slackened, so as to regulate the boxwood spring. The principle is exactly that of a child's rattle, and when rubbed down the thigh gives an exact imitation of the landrail's cry.

I never found either a comb, a couple of bones, one notched and the other smooth, or piece of iron filed like a saw, to be of any use, and, besides, it requires both hands to use them. The little

instrument here delineated is easily and quickly made, and is almost everlasting.

On the 1st of August, 1885, I arose about three in the morning, just as the day was breaking, and was delighted to see that there was every prospect of fine weather. It did not take long to dress and get out a supply of cartridges, some with small shot for the right barrel, and others with large for the left. This is a good plan to stick to all the season round in wild bird shooting, and then you are prepared for everything.

Well, I turned out, and first visited the boat where I sat for some little time, "waiting for something to turn up." However, after a while, I decided, as my time was limited, to walk along the river bank instead of staying in the boat. Soon after I started, a lot of birds came flying up the river, and I fired and dropped one. As usual, at the commencement of the season its companions hovered around it, so it was an easy matter to re-load and settle a couple more right and left. The remainder then decamped. Three birds for three shots—this was a good start, and what little wind there was blowing from the opposite side it was not a difficult task to secure the lot. Further on I encountered a couple of shooters who had got a bird or two.

Here for practice, and as I wanted one for stuffing, I dropped a gull in the river, and whilst my companion's dog was retrieving it I shot another, which, the dog perceiving, turned back and brought both to hand at once. Then a kingfisher darted by, and I took a snap shot and missed. Then one of the other fellows got a stock-dove.

I got in all 12 birds, besides joining my acquaintances at a couple more which, in our eagerness, we fired at together. I now returned home to breakfast and business.

Afternoon found me at the same spot. On the way I shot a bird which was picked up by a passing boat. Birds of all kinds were scarce, and I only got four small birds, two of which were sandpipers. Another person who was shooting fired along with me at a bird which I had stalked, using a cow as shelter. We riddled it—the bird, I mean, not the cow. I sat down on the grass, and pulling out a crust or two, demolished them, had a drink and a comfortable smoke, and then tramped on.

Plodding wearily homewards in the evening, I observed my companion of the afternoon, and two other young men sitting by the side of a "sluice." They called me to them, and when I got there one of them said, "Is this some of your work?" I replied, "What is it?" and stepping forward saw a dead man lying on his back at the bottom of the sluice. He was an elderly man, and had apparently been drowned a few days before. I did not stay long, but hastened home, with my appetite somewhat damaged with the unpleasant incident. I heard afterwards that the body

was never identified, the verdict of the coroner's jury being "Found drowned." Probably under the influence of drink, as there was an empty spirit bottle lying near him, the man had strayed on the marsh, fallen in the watercourse, and, unable to rise, been suffocated when the tide backed up. I am not likely to forget that 1st of August.

One afternoon early in the following month, I had my first out of the season on the river. Accompanied by my brother Edwin and his better half, the boat was launched, and against a strong head wind pulled down the river.

Soon after starting I dropped a bird, a long shot with the choke bore gun. The other barrel was fired at another, but missed it. The stricken bird lying on a sandbank, where there was no water to float the boat, I ran her on as far as I could and then jumped into the water, having on a pair of long clogs, which answer better than boots in keeping the feet both dry and warm (See Captain Lacy's "Modern Shooter.") I got the bird and proceeded lower down.

Before long a couple of young herring gulls made their appearance, and gently pushing the boat along we were soon in range, and both were dropped with a right and left. As before, they fell on the sand, and had to be waded for. The first was soon recovered, and I walked through the shallow water to the boat. Unfortunately, my brother had allowed her to drift further out, and not perceiving this, I was soon over the clog tops in the water. Meanwhile, the other bird, which was very lively, had managed to get lower down and climb up the bank. We started in pursuit, and when opposite, ran the boat ashore, when the bird instantly made for the water, where for some time our efforts to capture it were vain. At length, managing to get near enough, I raised an oar and brought the flat of the blade down on it in such a manner as promptly laid it out. They were a magnificent pair of birds, in good order for stuffing.

It is not very often one can get within range of them in this neighbourhood, but, doubtless, their tameness was caused by the roughness of the weather, as it was blowing hard at the time. Though the boat was pitched up and down pretty considerably every now and then, my sister-in-law enjoyed it very much, especially the shooting. This made it doubly agreeable, as it is not often one of the gentler sex takes an interest in such matters, at least that is my experience.

As we rowed down stream, we noticed four small birds running along the side. Getting as near as possible, one of them, a ring dotterel, rose and gave me a very easy shot, which I missed. It was flying slowly against the wind, and possibly I allowed too much for it. With the second barrel I floored a purre, which we picked up, and then a gull, flying in nice range, came to grief as

well. A couple of curlews now flew over, but out of range, as usual. Nothing appeared in sight for a long time. At length, however, a sandpiper got up and fell again. I had the pleasure (?) of wading for it. It afterwards proved to be in fine condition, having a layer of fat a quarter of an inch thick on the breast; this was my last shot.

A lot of lapwings were coming over very nicely, when a man on the bank fired, of course, without any result, except turning them in another direction. We had a favourable wind, and as it was getting dusk we decided to sail back without waiting for the flood. We managed very well until we got nearly home, when we grounded, and had to wait a short time for the tide, which soon floated us, and arrived back well pleased with the afternoon's sport.

A few days afterwards a singular incident occurred to me. I sprang a sandpiper from the brook, and fired, missing it, but a pied wagtail rising at the same moment was struck by the centre of the charge, and dropped instantly, almost shattered.

Accompanied by a friend, I went down in the boat on the boxing day following, but only got one shot, a lucky one though. There was little to be seen, and we were slowly dropping down quite disconsolate when a bird, which we took to be a curlew, dropped on the south bank. Pulling towards it, to our disgust, the boat grounded in very shallow water. Instantly I jumped overboard, and splashed towards the side. Steadying myself for a long sitting shot, the bird got up just as I was pulling the trigger. Instinctively I threw the muzzle up, and fancying the bird was hit, tried to follow it, but the water was too deep. I got in the boat, and we pushed her off the sand, and then to the bank, where I landed, and after a severe chase captured the bird, which was winged only. It was a black tailed godwit, "*Limosa melanura*," rather a rare bird in these parts, and a very decent addition to my collection.

I was, therefore, very well satisfied, even though it was the only shot I fired.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1886). CANOE
VOYAGE TO LANCASTER AND BACK.

Having spent a lot of time in doing up the boat and getting tackle ready, I awaited with impatience the 31st July. In the afternoon of that day my brother John and our mutual friend, J. K. Heginbottom, turned up, as arranged. We got off about two o'clock, two other friends, A. Saul and W. Booth, taking us in tow, beat down stream. After a short time the tow-line slipped at the other end, probably done purposely, and we were left to our own resources. We accordingly pulled away, but finally hoisted the lug sail, and did very well until we grounded just past Freckleton Pool, when I doffed my foot coverings, jumped in, and dragged the boat to the side.

We then set out for the Guide's House. On the way, on the principle of its being no use carrying coals to Newcastle, we hid our bottle of whisky, depositing the row-locks in the same place ready for morning. Arriving at the house, we ordered a good supper, and then walked round the fields, getting a few larks and thrushes for practice and the pot.

Meanwhile, B. and S. made their appearance, S.'s boat drawing more water than ours they had grounded where it was rather too deep to wade, and accordingly had to wait for a punt, which they hired to bring them ashore. When the flood came they went aboard, and, getting up the pool, slept (?) in the cockpit. As it rained during the night, they were not very comfortable. We, not having made any arrangements for lodgings, were obliged to sleep three in a bed. We pushed the bedside up to the wall, fixed three chairs along the other side, and thus lay across it. This is not a bad plan, and is worth remembering.

At two a.m. I and H. were up, and after taking a drink of warm water—viz., very weak tea or coffee—and getting something to eat, lit our pipes, and sallied forth in quest of the whisky bottle. We overshot the mark, but at length found it, and, after a good drink, turned back.

Some men having informed us the previous night that there were a lot of dotterels came at break of day round a boat in which they slept, and invited us to come, we endeavoured to find the boat. We did find a boat, and, knocking against the side, asked if that was the place where the dotterels came. Some one in the forecastle said, "No; it was further on." We had very little doubt that we were at the right place, but that the men did not wish to be disturbed.

About 3 15, day began to dawn, and we got in a stranded punt, from where we could hear the birds calling all around. A sudden heavy shower coming on made us decamp for shelter to the hedges, where we managed to keep pretty dry. At length the weather cleared up, and we again proceeded to the shore, where I succeeded in stopping a ring dotterel with my first shot of the season. The weather again appearing threatening, I sought cover in the cockpit of a smack lying ashore.

I had scarcely ensconced myself when "mark" from my companion put me on the "qui vive." A couple of curlews were coming straight on. As they passed I saluted the first, and down he fell in a heap on the mud. I swung round and blazed at the other, but the topping lift of the boat balked me, and the shot was somewhat behind, which was a pity, as the bird picked up was the finest curlew I have ever shot, and the other appeared as big.

Walking along the shore, a lot of purres flew over, but, though duly fired at, they all declined the invitation to stay. Scarcely was the cartridge replaced when a lot more whirled by, leaving three of their number behind. Then followed an easy shot at a ring dotterel, which was missed. I had a long stalk after a couple of curlews, one of which seemed to go away a little heavier after having had a couple of barrels emptied for his benefit at long range. B. and S. came along the shore, and, taking their stand near a steamboat lying on the beach, soon were blazing away. Once I heard four barrels go, and "That did him," said one, "Pick that bird up, will you?" to a boatman. It afterwards proved to be a red shank, or pool snipe.

H. fired several shots, but did very poorly. He was using a long single heavy muzzle-loader, and it was rather awkward for him. While this was going on I sat on a stone, and, notwithstanding the sandwich I had eaten previous to turning out, I began to feel so hungry that I took out one of the purres, and actually devoured the best part of it raw. I must say that it took away the unpleasant sense of faintness completely, and I shall never hesitate to do the like again under similar circumstances. Of course, it goes without saying that we all ate a good breakfast afterwards.

About 10 o'clock the flood made, and we journeyed down to the boat. Having a fair wind, we hoisted the sail, my brother took the helm, and we were soon on our way home. There was very little to be done. We had a few shots, but only bagged a couple of birds, one of which I dropped as it rose from a drain, jumping ashore for it and again aboard while the boat was under weigh.

H. got a couple of birds, B. a couple, and my brother one. We saw a lot of curlews, a heron, and a few purres and lapwings, but no ducks, as the latter are very scarce in August; in fact, all kinds of birds were rather less in number than usual. This may

be attributed to the number of navvies working on the river development, many of whom use guns all the year round.

Previous to disposing of my canoe, a clerical friend suggested that it would be a nice out to go from Preston to Lancaster in her, via the canal. I fell in, with the idea (not the canal), and, writing to my cousin, James Higson, of Manchester, arranged the trip. I met the Manchester train on the Saturday before Whitsuntide 1884, my cousin duly arrived, and after liquoring up, debated the point whether to go or not. Tossing up a coin settled the matter in the affirmative. We at once proceeded to the Canal Office, and took out our "bill of lading," for which we paid 3s. 6d. The said bill was half as long as my arm, and specified nature of vessel, tonnage, cargo, destination, &c.

Having already got the boat carted to the canal (and weighed, 2cwt. 1qr. 0lb., or, with tackle aboard, 2cwt. 3qr. 0lb.) in anticipation, we partook of a good meal and embarked at seven p.m., taking one of the youngsters a short distance. After leaving him we pulled in turns, and, having a fiddle aboard, I performed for the amusement of the cattle on the banks. It was diverting to see them come running up at the unwonted sounds. I have observed them doing it before; poultry, also, may be seen gravely shaking their heads, if anyone will sing for them.

Well, after some tiresome work we arrived at the Clifton Arms, where we had supper, and put on board a gallon bottle of beer. Then, as it was moonlight, we took it in turns to drag the boat. Fixing the line on the port bow, we managed without steering, and so the one who was resting in the boat could lie down. This went on till about midnight, when we got to the other side, and lay down head to feet in the cockpit, which I had now lengthened to six feet. However, as my cousin is rather over that height, he had much difficulty in lying down. Either his boots were in my face, or vice versa. Covered with our overcoats and the sail, after a good deal of twisting about and asking each other if he was comfortable, we managed to get into an uneasy slumber.

Towards morning we awoke fearfully starved, teeth audibly chattering. We quite forgot we had a small bottle of whisky with us, and at once got up and commenced the towing process. As the sun arose, and began to warm us, then we enjoyed it. We could hear the corncrakes calling in the meadows; the green plovers were engaged in nesting, and wheeled about on all sides; water hens glided through the bullrushes; rabbits scuttled off along the hedge bottoms; any quantity of rooks were cawing away; a kingfisher darted off under one of the bridges, its emerald back glistening "like a living jewel" in the morning sunlight; a cock pheasant got up from the towpath and whirred away over the fence. The water was quite clear, and we could see the fish on the bottom.

Sometime during the forenoon, past Garstang, we got hot water at a cottage, and brewing tea, partook of breakfast. Then, like giants refreshed, on again through the waving cornfields and scented meadows we wound our way, until, as we neared Lancaster the scenes were still prettier. Now and then we would come to a bridge which would be draped in ivy, and looking through the arch a vista of trees would appear overhanging the water, the sunlight falling in patches between the leaves, and lighting up the water lilies below. Vehicles passing over the bridge would be stopped, so that their occupants could gratify their curiosity as to the kind of craft we were in. Most amusing were their remarks. The most euphonious comparison they made was likening her to a coffin.

A man called out, "You should have had a line out and you'd have caught a boat load of fish." I hauled in a spoon bait, a bunch of weed on the end, and replied, "This is all we've caught coming from Preston." The man dropped like a shot below the parapet of the bridge! We met only one barge, and commiserating the men in charge my cousin said, "What! have you got to work on Sunday?" Slowly taking his pipe out of his mouth, the bargee replied, "What the h—— else are you doing?" He certainly scored one against us there.

Within a few miles of Lancaster an old heron got up and settled by a brook further on, afterwards rising in nice range. He knew there was no danger. We had a favourable wind and sailed for a short time, but progress was so slow that my cousin began towing again. During the day he did a stretch of seven miles (by the mile stones) on one occasion. We now made our toilets, and lots of lads, taking a walk by the side, offered to tow us. Hitching on to the line, away they ran at such a rate that we both went forward or the boat would have swamped astern. I knelt down in the bows, out with the fiddle, and we reached the wharf at Lancaster about one p.m., with considerable "éclat." We showed the bill of lading, and leaving our boat in charge of the wharf-master, strolled into the town.

We got some luncheon, walked round "Gaunt's embattled pile," and wondered whether his effigy ever felt starved. What scenes have passed in review before it! What tales it might tell if it could see and speak! We passed through the churchyard and on to the Lune, where we loitered about looking at the boats and calmly indulging in the weed. Next we watched a Salvation Army open-air "service," and then off to the boat.

We unlocked the cover, and were getting in, when the man asked for our ticket. We reminded him he had already seen it, but, to our intense chagrin, he said we would require another to go back! We explained that, being a pleasure excursion, we

never for a moment thought we should have to pay for going back, or we would not have come, or at least have stopped before getting to Lancaster. We got out, and went to the station to see about getting selves and boat off by train, but, being Sunday, it was no use, and after interviewing another of the canal officials we paid a further 3s. 6d., and set off back, looking very sheepish and discontented. Of course, we rowed off, but in a while resumed our dragging, muttering "Seven shillings to pay for hauling a boat to Lancaster and back!"

Our fishing resulted in catching a large horse mussel, and then, much to our relief, we lost the spoon bait. About 10 o'clock we stopped for supper, and ate all our provisions up, including a few oranges (skins and all), purchased in Lancaster. Then we lay down, as on the previous night, but after resting an hour my cousin declared he could "stand" it no longer. "Why, what will you do?" "Get out and tow," he said; and so he did, and through the long night he tramped away, while I lay in the boat.

Occasionally I looked up, and could just discern him tramping on. With my head muffled up I would lie back, and after a while would hear his footsteps reverberating under a bridge, then would come a couple of bumps as the boat passed under the bridge, and so on. As daylight appeared a cold wind rose, and I got out to help at the dragging, but here we found that the boat was harder to haul when empty by either one or both of us than when one was aboard. Accordingly I suggested to my companion that he had better ride, but both preferred walking and working to sitting still. At last, as we were getting along so badly, "Drag her to the side and I'll get in," said my cousin. I did so; he laid hold of the mast, put his foot on the deck, she canted half over, and he was up to the knee in the canal. Of course, he let go the mast, and the boat instantly righted as he sprang out of the water. How I laughed as I tugged at his boot and wrung out his sock, and finally he joined in, enjoying his ludicrous situation.

Getting all right, we soon arrived at the Clifton Arms, where we had a delicious breakfast of bread and butter, new-laid eggs, and coffee, at a charge of 9d. each only. We had to wait while the cows were milked, but did not object to that.

Proceeding on for a short distance, we stopped for a rest, and having a couple of rods, &c., with us, fished for an hour. I caught nothing, and my cousin, being asleep in the hedge backing, I deemed it time to give up, so once more we pushed on, and arrived home about 11 o'clock a.m., altogether tired out, but feeling satisfied at having done what we set out to do. I wrote to headquarters about the imposition of a return fare, and in return received a polite note, with a couple of shillings' worth of stamps enclosed.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1887).

What a day Monday, the 17th January, was! But it promised fair enough at 6 a.m., being quite calm and frosty. As we were going to the station, however, we observed that the wind was rising. On arriving at Lytham it was still worse, insomuch that after consulting the boatman, my friend (Mr. J. H. Threlfall) deemed it inadvisable to venture out with his punt and big gun. It was rather disappointing, to be sure, but I cheerfully acquiesced in his decision, as it was entirely in accordance with my own opinion.

Having sat for a short time smoking at the hotel, we shouldered our 12-bores, and set out to tramp along the shore. There were plenty of purres, knots, and gulls flying about, and carefully stalking along the edge of the water I was rewarded by getting a shot into a small lot, dropping two of them as they flew off. Picking up the purres, for such they were, we walked on. I took close to the water, and my companion kept above. I had several shots, but all misses, being unfortunately without any "8's," which would have been more suitable for small shore birds than the "5's" and "4's," which we used respectively.

Now, I have a singular facility for getting into a mess, and never go out in company but I manage to get into more dirt than the others, at least my better half says so, and she must be right. There was no exception on this occasion. I came to a patch of mud which appeared to be nicely frozen over, and capable of bearing any weight. No sooner on it than I went up to the knees. I struggled on, and got through it, but with a substantial coating of mud on the leggings. Of course, my companion enjoyed it from the bank, and so did I when out of it.

Going on, we came to a creek, which necessitated a considerable detour inland. I dropped a gull here, but as there were difficulties in the way of retrieving we left it. Keeping on the high road until past the dock, we again made for the shore. A strong easterly wind, bitterly cold, was hard to encounter, but we toiled on, our faces being of a cherry red, with icicles on our beards and moustaches. A good many ducks and a few curlews passed over, some of the latter not very much out of range. We marked a few down, but they rose before we got up to them. Still we kept on, noting schools of shore birds in the distance, until we came to a rather large creek. Here, to our intense disgust, two lots of ducks got up, five in each, and away they went. As my friend

saw them in a bunch, we should probably have got a good shot had we only approached a hundred yards lower down, the wind blowing directly from them to us.

Judging there might be more, and the creek being difficult to cross, we turned to follow it up inland. Before going very far, my companion called my attention to a duck which had just risen from a small tributary stream on the other side. It was a nice shot, and down it came to my first barrel. The next moment up went my friend's gun to his shoulder, and another duck just about to rise was despatched to join its mate. This was good luck, and we were duly elated. We had a long way to go round for them, but got across the stream very nicely by the aid of a boat laid up in the centre of it. We found our spoil to be a couple of common wild ducks.

Trudging along past some nets set for the purpose of catching wild fowl, we came to a stranded boat, in the cockpit of which we sheltered from the wind and indulged in a comfortable smoke. Here I had a nice shot, but unaccountably missed with both barrels. This concluded our sport on the shore. We were almost numbed with cold, especially our hands. At the Guide's House we stayed for an hour to rest and refresh. Whilst sitting here we got in conversation with a couple of men employed on the dredgers, both of which we had passed on the way.

A tale told by one of the men is too good to pass unnoticed, as it may serve for a warning to the honourable fraternity of shore shooters, especially those from inland towns. It was substantially as follows:—

Not very long ago a gentleman from Bury, who is in the habit of visiting the banks of the Ribble to exercise his gun, being out in a boat, the crew of which he had somewhat unwisely allowed, or most probably caused, to imbibe a considerable quantity of beer, directed them to anchor at a certain spot and remain there while he went for a stalk ashore, his intention being, as it was rather misty, to follow the mark of his own footsteps to the place on his return. So far good; but, unfortunately, the gentleman was so engrossed in his sport that he forgot all about the flight of time, the flight of birds being a more agreeable subject to take observations upon. At length his exertions appeared to be on the point of receiving an adequate return. Through the mist a long line of birds came flying very low and straight for him. Down he sunk on one knee, and with finger on trigger anxiously awaited the moment when his trusty weapon (and it was a trusty weapon, too, as the sequel will show) might account for a hetacomb of slain. Nearer came the line, but vague suspicions arose that something was wrong, followed by the certainty when he found himself in the midst of the first rush of a sixteen-foot tide! The

curling foam he had mistaken in the fog for birds. Struggling out, he managed to get to the place where the boat was left, when, to his horror, it was not to be found. With nervous haste he fired his gun, and then, fast as he could charge and fire, sent forth signals of distress. Fortunately, the boatmen heard him, and rowing up in all haste reached him just as the water had mounted to his armpits!

I was much amused when the story-teller, detailing some of his own troubles, and receiving some Job's comfort from my friend, asked, "Are you a local preacher, sir?" As local preachers are not in the habit of perambulating the shore with fowling pieces in the depth of winter, we enjoyed the remark intensely. Having sufficiently recruited, we marched off for Kirkham Station. I got a redwing just as we set out. I may say that my friend generously conceded me the best chances. We got to the station after a long and tiring walk through a blinding snowstorm, and were heartily glad to get home.

Not as blazoning forth my own achievements, but for the guidance of amateurs, it will not be unwise to give here a few of my own experiences, bearing on the risks of shore shooting. I was pulling up in the canoe one fine afternoon on a strong spring tide, with a companion, W. Booth, when, fancying the water ran quicker on the south side, I suggested that it would be as well to cross. There were some heavy waves in the distance on that side, caused, probably, by the under-current. My companion demurred to this, and pointing out the waves, said we had better stay where we were. However, as the rough water was some distance ahead, and not doubting it was travelling with the tide, I struck across. Just as we got nicely in the track of the waves they ran back, and we were pitched about, as it seemed to us, in our frail craft, in a frightful manner. "Pull for your life," cried my friend, his face turning yellow. Doubtless my visage was quite as bad, but, without reply, I steadily kept on slantingly across. Had we broached to, well—I've no doubt it would have been an upset. We kept out of such places in future.

On another occasion, taking my eldest boy with me, I anchored the canoe to the wall on the south side, opposite Freckleton Pool, and seeing some geese, as it wanted half an hour to tide time, set out after them. I was unsuccessful, but got another bird, which took some time to retrieve. Picking it up, I saw some boats coming up the river, and was at once aware the tide was making. With a beating heart I ran on, and, though encumbered with a heavy 8-bore, made good progress. When I got nearly to the wall I saw that the hollow on my side of it was full of water, the wall buried, the boat tugging at her anchor, and the lad sitting quietly astern. I rushed along till I came to where the water was shallow enough to reach the wall; then through it, and along the

top of the wall, eighteen inches under the water, and so to the boat, jumping in much exhausted. Taking the anchor in, I pulled off boots and socks—it was a cold but fine winter's day—and wrapping my feet in the sail pulled for home as quickly as possible.

I have ever since made it a rule not to leave a boat for any distance unless there was a couple of hours to spare before the expected advent of the tide. When thinking of such experiences as these in after years it does not bring any pleasure.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1887).

Thursday, the 8th September, I set out alone in the boat, taking my 12-bore gun and 50 cartridges. I also took a fluke "rake," (now illegal), but as the shooting proved very good, I did not use the fishing implement. What little breeze there was being from the West, and therefore adverse, I leisurely pulled down the stream. I had not got very far when a flock of small birds alighted on the north side. Having plenty of small shot, I inserted a couple of 9's cartridges, and prepared for a good shot. However, on the birds rising, only two of them came in range, both of which fell to one shot. One I picked up, and the other, a little boy, who was looking for crabs, retrieved from the bank. Not having any coppers, I could only thank him.

I was astonished at the small size of the birds, and whilst examining them it struck me they were little stints.

Afterwards, by the aid of Montague's Dictionary and other books, I made sure they were such, and very proud I was, as they were the first I ever saw.

Further on I saw the head and neck of a curlew just showing over a hillock on the bank. Feeling sure of it, I neglected to change the 9's cartridge in the other barrel, and stepping on one of the thwarts I let fly with No. 4's. Unluckily, the boat gave a dip just as the trigger was pressed, and away sped the curlew, the shot having struck just below it. The No. 9's which I sent after it doubtless accelerated its flight, but that was all.

To make sure, however, I jumped ashore in time to see the bird disappear in the distance.

However, I managed to secure a black-headed gull in winter plumage, which I had shot at just previously, and which had gone over the bank evidently struck.

Pulling lower down, much annoyed, I heard some more birds on the south side, and therefore landed and, peeping over the wall, saw a great number of purres and ring dotterels spread over the marsh, in nice range, but very much scattered. There were, however, several nicely placed for a shot a little higher up the river. Stooping beneath the wall, I stepped very gently on the slippery stones, and at length got opposite them. Just as I was about to fire three teal whirled over the river, and I had time to get a barrel in. One of the birds fell on the opposite wall. The ring dotterels, etc., vanished.

I fixed a stone on the top of the wall opposite where the duck dropped, and then going back to the boat, hoisted the sail, and had got nearly opposite my "monument" when my boat grounded. But I was not going to be done, so off went boots, socks, and nether garments, and dropping the anchor, away I splashed over the side. When nearly at the place the bird got up and began running towards the river. Forgetting I was in a fit costume for following it, I let fly and smashed the bird.

Getting to the boat again, I took up the anchor, pushed her into deep water, jumped aboard, dropped the sail, resumed my garments, and proceeded on my way rejoicing. I was awfully thirsty, but as the drainage of the good town of Preston falls in the Ribble I could not drink of the water. I once did taste it, but I'll stand a deal before I repeat my experiment.

At this juncture I fortunately came across a couple of friends, who had journeyed down before me. They had got about a score of purres, godwits, and ring dotterels, &c., and what interested me more just then, a large bottle of beer. Of this I had a couple of glasses, and it is needless to say it was highly appreciated. I hitched my boat alongside theirs, whilst we had something to eat, and the flood making soon after, we waited a short time for water, and then set sail.

I had several good shots on the way, altogether getting 33 birds, viz., 1 teal, 1 rook, 2 kittiwakes, 3 gulls, 2 curlew sandpipers, 5 little stints, 4 ring dotterels, 14 purres, and a bird which I made out to be a ruff in winter plumage, but which my stuffer has since written to say was a reeve. It is not very often one can make as mixed a bag as the above.

The following Monday my friends, Buckley and Berry made their appearance by the first train from Manchester, and after partaking of some refreshment we set off. I pulled down to the Naze, and we had very fair sport.

It was a very showery day, and with the exception of Buckley, we had no waterproofs. However, he had on a very good one, and as each shower came on we dropped the anchor and all three crouched under the macintosh.

The water being low, we grounded many a time, and it was all that Buckley and I could do to get the boat afloat, though we were up to the knees in the water (minus foot gear, of course) pulling and shoving as hard as we could.

However, we managed to land at Guides, where a substantial meal made us forget our hard work.

At tide time we set off back with a fair wind, and had again good sport. About the last shots we fired we dropped a couple of young herring gulls, one of which fell a long way inland, but I meant having it, and splashing through a rather wide stream of

water, I found it laid dead on the greensward beyond. Our total bag was 43 birds, consisting principally of purres, ring dotterels, bar-tailed godwits, and several little stints.

The next morning I again went down with my friend, Doctor Lamb. We pulled down, the breeze being still from the west, and had a very enjoyable day. Being very fine, the birds were wilder, and we only got 20 between us. We saw a team of ducks flying over, but not being in cover they flew wide of us.

While waiting for the flood, having a small spirit lamp and kettle, we brewed a glass of warm water and whisky aboard the boat, and very good it was, as we were getting a little chilled.

We had a nice breeze home again, and got back by dusk.

The following morning, I was not intending going again, but a telegram from Mr. Goodson arriving, I met him and a young companion at half-past 10, and very soon after we had embarked got a young herring gull. We landed on the marsh, looking for some curlews which we heard, and I put up a fine hare, at which, of course, I did not fire.

Then, not seeing the curlews, we took to the boat again, and a stock dove coming straight over, I dropped it. I had some fair sport among the purres, and having a nice chance, killed a couple of little stints right and left as they flew by, I standing on the bank at the time.

It rained very fast at one time, and accordingly we made for a public-house, where we had a dish of ham and eggs and some beer. We walked down to the boat, but a shower coming on, we sat under a tarpaulin which was spread over a stranded boat, probably for the accommodation of the salmon fishers.

It was very pleasant lying there smoking and watching, and listening to the rain pattering on the water. Under such circumstances I always think of old "Isaac" and his scholar sitting under the hedge-sheltering and discoursing, and many a time have I been tempted when reflecting on that incident to take an angle rod and try my luck, but almost invariably without success.

We had a few more shots, getting again exactly 20 birds, and sailed home, the wind being in its usual quarter. It was quite dark when we arrived, and, after a parting drink, my friend left for the station, well pleased with his day's outing.

We only saw a few ducks and curlews, also some golden plover and lapwings, but all well out of reach. A heron or two also sailed by in the distance.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1889).

On December 2nd, I went down to the punt at an early hour, and, getting all the tackle aboard, waited patiently for my friend, Mr. Nield, of Ashton-under-Lyne. Soon I heard the rumbling of wheels, the luggage was quickly deposited on board the boat, and I pulled down stream. We were both armed with heavy 12-bores, mine $7\frac{1}{2}$ lbs., and N.'s nearly 9 lbs. Our first bird was a stock dove, which both fired at, when it dropped a good way inland, and after landing we were a long time before we retrieved it. Then a whimbrel got up wild to N., who turned it to me. It was by no means a difficult shot, but, somehow, it got away from both barrels. Getting aboard the boat again, we pulled down to the pool, where I beached her, and N. landed.

Being engaged in clearing up the tackle, I did not observe a small team of duck, which flew up the river just behind, until I heard N.'s cry of "Mark!"

It was, however, then too late to fire. Another boat gave them a salute, but with the result only of causing them to scatter. I jumped ashore, dug the anchor into the sand, and, happening to look up, saw one of the duck coming in a direct line overhead. I put up the gun, covered the bird, then advanced the muzzle half an inch or so, and pulled, when the bird threw up its head, closed its wings, and came down with a flop into the pool. On picking it up, it proved to be a fine mallard.

Proceeding on our way, we marked down some lapwings, but they proved too wary for us. Shortly after N. dropped a fieldfare. Arriving at the Bush Inn, we ordered some refreshment, and, borrowing a dog, proceeded to try the field where we had seen the lapwings for snipe. And they were snipe, too. I should think our confounded animal put up about a score in that field all out of range. We tried to drive the dog back, but it enjoyed the fun, and preferred staying. We only got one shot. One of the snipe, after flying off, turned back and came over N.'s head at a considerable height, when he made a remarkably good shot and dropped it. Turning back, we enjoyed a well-earned meal, for which I am afraid to say how little we paid. After a rest and smoke we went down to the boat, having a good few shots at curlews, &c., but doing no bagging, and soon after, the tide making, we got aboard and pulled up stream. About this time I dropped a one-legged ring-plover, a by no means uncommon occurrence in shore-shooting—at least, I have shot several birds which had only one limb to walk on. Mr. N. got three more birds,

and after a lot of waiting for water we managed to get home about seven o'clock, rather tired, but well satisfied with our out. The same day an acquaintance with a single choke 8-bore, which I found him, got a wigeon, teal, and lapwing, besides dropping a curlew, which he could not find. This was not bad work, considering he had only eight shots.

I am aware the above is not at all an extra good bag, either as regards quantity or quality, but it is a very fair one, considering how near the place is to a large town and several popular watering-places. I am afraid a good many shooters like to exaggerate both numbers killed and quality and species of birds, as, after an experience of over twenty years' shore shooting at various places, I find it is very difficult indeed to get what the books call "fowl."

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1890).

Having arranged overnight with a "client" to meet at the old dock at 3 a.m. next morning, 2nd October, I went to bed at 10 p.m. with the determination to get up at two o'clock. Ten minutes before that hour I awoke, jumped up, and was soon ready. After eating a slight breakfast, I shouldered gun and oars, and at a quarter to three set out. At five minutes to, I was at the boat, and Mr. Curtis arrived in another five minutes, and then we set off. It was a fine calm morning, with a brilliant moon, and there was no difficulty in seeing the way as I pulled down the river. Another boat hailed us, and asked us not to kill all the birds. Of course, we promised to leave them a few.

We passed the bull nose, Savick Brook, the dredger, and barges, &c., and then landed to have a short run ashore to warm ourselves, as a slight but chilly wind had sprung up.

Having succeeded in restoring circulation, we embarked, and pulled steadily on. About half-past four we drew up on the south side, made fast the boat, and stepped ashore. Birds were calling freely, around us—curlews and lapwings. It was still dark, but as we faced the east there was a slight glow on the horizon, and soon the distant hills could be faintly seen. Presently they showed a darker loom, and when the sun rose faded almost out of sight. We had a couple of shots each, but got nothing. Boarding the boat, we proceeded lower down. Occasionally one or the other would look over the river wall for birds. Once I saw a curlew get up, but, unfortunately, the gun was lying on the boat's thwart.

The sun was now well risen, and we again landed. Here C. stalked, and shot a grey plover, and I waded through some water and retrieved it. Then he dropped a whimbrel from the boat. The bird was on the sand, so we put to to get it, when it rose and flew with legs hanging down. Thinking it would not go many yards, C. refrained from firing until it was too late. So there was a good bird lost, much to our annoyance. We followed it a long way, but in vain, though we saw plenty of other birds—ducks and plovers.

Coming back, I had a long shot at a golden plover going away overhead, and it appeared to drop amongst some heaps of mud near the edge of the river. Cautiously approaching the place, I saw the bird on the stones of the river wall, and with an ounce of No. 6 forthwith despatched it. Almost at the same moment C. shot a bird which had allowed him to approach quite close. I took it

to be a greenshank. Then we got in the boat and pulled lower down. At the Naze we again landed on the south side, and walked over the marsh. A shank got up, an easy shot, but having the sun in our faces we each missed it with both barrels.

Again we re-embarked, and shortly after we picked up a passenger who wanted ferrying across. As we were approaching the north side we espied several birds stood on the side. All flew away but one, which C. quickly rolled over, and a shank passing behind him he quickly turned round and dropped it. We picked it up and landed our passenger. Then I went for the first bird, which proved to be a bar-tailed godwit. Crossing the river, we anchored and partook of some refreshment.

When this important duty was concluded, we set off in different directions. I got behind a lamp "post" and dropped a couple of gulls right and left. One of the birds the wind brought to my side of the water, and in drawing it to the edge with a piece of wood slipped in with one leg! The bird was a mature black-headed gull in winter plumage, and a good specimen. Returning to the boat, I took off my legging, boot, and sock, and wringing out the water from the first and last, spread them on one of the thofts to dry.

In an hour or so the flood made, and after waiting a few minutes for the water to deepen, we pulled off up the river. My companion dropped a fine black-headed gull, which we got, and near Freckleton Bank missed a nice chance at some dunlin. We saw hundreds of lapwings and plovers, and plenty of curlews also. I called several lapwings overhead, and missed a fair chance at one. Nearer home, I got a couple of dunlin from a flock, and C. got a curlew-sandpiper. We had hoped to get a few little stints, but were not successful.

We had a beautiful day and good sport, arriving at the old dock at one p.m. I ought to say we fired a good many shots, and might have killed many more birds if our "form" had been good.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1891).

Early on the morning of September 24th, accompanied by my son John, I proceeded to launch the boat over the mud. This most disagreeable work took about a quarter of an hour, and when we finally got afloat it was some minutes before I had breath to row.

It was a cold morning, with a strong wind blowing; so when the rowing had warmed us up a bit I hoisted the sail, and we went on at a good rate. We saw plenty of birds, mostly gulls, and at last landed for the sake of a little exercise on the north side. Here I dropped a young lesser black-backed gull and a mature common gull, which with a little difficulty, having to cross a small sluice, we retrieved.

The sun having now a little more power, we again embarked, and proceeded down the river. Flocks of lapwings kept flying across, and I marked down a great number of these birds on the south bank. Thereupon we quietly dropped the sail, and with an oar astern gently sculled lower down close under the bank. At last, taking a peep over, there the birds were, and very thickly congregated, but out of range almost. Farther down they appeared nearer to the wall, but much more dispersed.

However, we decided to try for them, and gently sculled on. Having arrived at the spot, I quietly sat up with the gun cocked and a couple of No. 5 cartridges all right. The birds rose instantly, and rather far off. Firing both barrels almost together, however, a couple dropped. Then there was a hurried jump ashore and an exhilarating chase, as one of the birds was endeavouring to cross a rather wide patch of water. But it was soon caught, and just at this moment another batch of lapwings passed, but rather wide. There was just time for one shot, and another bird stopped behind. Taking to the boat again, we got opposite the Naze, when still another lapwing flying overhead collapsed very neatly to our barrel.

Going on, we got a couple of black-headed gulls, a ring plover, and a starling.

Of course, there were many misses between. In fact, after August, there are far more misses than hits.

The rain now began to descend very freely, and as the wind was fair we determined to hoist the sail, and try to get back without waiting for the flood. My son took the tiller, and I sat forward. We made pretty fair headway against the stream. Here, however, I am ashamed to say, I managed to let the hammer slip from my

thumb (my hands being wet and cold), and bang went the gun.

Fortunately, it was pointed over the bows, and there was no damage done, with the exception of a shot or two hitting the handle of a fluke-rake, an implement we had taken on the off-chance of getting a few fish. But the rain stopped this part of the business.

After this I shot another black-headed gull, and in rounding up to retrieve it, the strain upon the block caused the strap to give way, and down came the sail on our heads, whilst the boat began to drift down stream. My fingers being chilled, it was some time before the block could be restrapped, especially as I had a rather bad cut on the ball of the thumb from the tail of the hammer, when the gun slipped off. We, therefore, decided to wait for the tide, and accordingly landed near a public-house, where we had some refreshment and a comfortable smoke. It was far more pleasant sitting there over a good fire than facing the rain in an open boat.

However, having well warmed ourselves, and the tide time drawing near, we again sallied forth. There was nothing in range, so we were very glad when the flood came. In a few minutes we got afloat, hoisted the sail, and in the course of an hour and a-half were back again. On our way back, I dropped a small bird, probably a sandpiper. I saw it come down not many yards away. The rain had ceased, and there was scarcely a ripple on the water, and yet it suddenly disappeared. It was suggested to me afterwards that I'd put so much lead into it as to sink it!

DIVER SHOOTING AT FLEETWOOD (1893).

On the 2nd November, I went over to spend a couple of days with my friend Buckley, of St. Bernards-on-Sea, as the familiar Knott End is now more euphoniously termed. In the afternoon my friend drove us to Stalmine, and we tried a lot of ground, but it was almost dusk, and our bag was very small—a water hen and a rabbit only.

Next day B. proposed we should try diver shooting, and to this I cordially assented. Provided with refreshment in the shape of meat pies and whisky, we walked down to the ferry slip, and engaged a man and large open boat fitted with a lug sail to take us "outside." There was plenty of wind, but no rain, so we settled down for a comfortable sail. B.'s weapon was a double pin fire 10's gauge, and mine a double central 12's. Our shot was principally No. 4's, with plenty of powder behind it.

For some time there was very little prospect of sport. There were very few divers to be seen, and these were on the wing—a bad sign—and at a great distance. We had got past the light-house before we saw anything in range, and then began operations by missing a gull.

In the meantime the water had got very rough, and as we tacked about looking for birds the way the seas came aboard was lively, to say the least of it. The first time I got one in the face, which trickled down my breast and out at my boots, I involuntarily gasped, but after a while became quite reconciled to it. It was impossible to stick on the seats and shoot, so I comfortably sat down on the ceiling amidships, where I could keep a look-out on the lee side. Of course, we were now so wet it didn't matter where we sat.

At last a diver was seen on the water, and the boatman took us nicely up to it, when B. promptly despatched a charge of shot to its address. But the bird was up to it, or I should rather say, down upon it, for it dived and didn't come up for some time. Then after another tack, I got a shot at it, but without apparent result, but B. poured another barrel into it, and that settled it.

It was a difficult matter to aim at all, what with the pitching of the boat, and the rising and falling of the bird on the water.

After cruising about for some time, another diver was sighted, and shot by B., whilst I despatched an ivory gull which came to inspect the proceedings. Then I got a lot of shooting, dropping half a dozen more birds, mostly of the same species. B.'s gun having the empty cartridge cases fast in both chambers, I had

rather a gay time of it, whilst B. was on his knees alongside me dropping a penknife down his barrels and using very strong language. At last we got one case out, but the base of the other came off, leaving the paper tube struck fast. Then my gun played a similar trick, and we were thus reduced to a barrel apiece. We shot another gull each, and I shot a diver. B. retrieved most of the birds, sometimes picking a sleeve full of water instead of the game. But he managed very well.

The weather keeping rough, and our garments and cartridges very wet, we decided to give it up, and having a fair wind, we were soon back again. Just before landing, B. fired at a bird at a very long distance, more to empty the gun than anything else, and to our surprise the bird came down, but as it dropped in the shallows we did not attempt to get it.

After dining with B. and his estimable family, I borrowed some fresh garments and came home well satisfied with the few hours spent in pursuit of divers. The only mistake we made was in taking paper cases—I had over a dozen spoiled—had we had brass, neither of the guns would have been rendered partially “hors de combat.” But then, we didn’t expect its being so very rough.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1894).

That summer I built a flat-bottomed shooting canoe, or gondola, 16ft. long by 4ft. 6in. beam, and 16in. deep. She had about five feet of deck forward, a square stern, and plenty of camel in her bottom, and was just right for shooting in shallow places, as she only drew a few inches of water. Owing to other business, although I duly kept up the 1st of August, I was unable to launch her until the 26th of that month, when three of us shoved her into the water at an early hour in the morning. She proved to be as tight as a bottle, which, of course, gave us very great satisfaction. There was a slight rain falling at the time, but the weather cleared up shortly, and away I pulled down the river, the boat doing very well, but having a tendency to sheer on account of the bottom being so round.

Our bag proved to be a very light one, the weather being much too mild and warm. I only got a couple of ring-plover, and the same number of dunlin, whilst my brother Edwin and friend, Wm. B. Edmondson, each shot four birds, so the honours were equally divided. The total bag was four ring-plover, three dunlin, three common sandpipers, and a couple of other small birds. We had a good breakfast at the Bush Inn, and on the tide making, pulled back home, all well tired, satisfied with the boat, but not with the sport.

Early the following morning we again set off, this time being accompanied by a couple of relations of the gentler sex, who appeared to enjoy the outing rather more than ourselves, but complained a little of being cramped, which is generally the case in a small boat.

We broke our fast at the same hospitable place as the day before, and on returning to the boat found her high and dry, about thirty yards from the water, which was ebbing rapidly, so we lost no further time, but proceeded to launch at once. We got the women to sit first on the stem and then the stern whilst we worked the boat round as on a pivot, and thus got her into the water once more.

Up to this time we had had very little sport, but now it began to be a bit more brisk. We had got nearly to Lytham when we saw a mixed lot of gulls and dunlin, &c., just over the wall. We crouched low, and I gently sculled the boat to the bank, when we jumped up and fired. I dropped a tern and my brother a black-headed gull. The birds had got some distance from the wall, consequently were rather too far away, or we might have done

better. I shot a couple of ring-plover, a sanderling, and dunlin, my brother accounted for another couple of birds, whilst Will got 11. Our total bag was one gull, one tern, eight ring-plover, five dunlin, two sanderlings, and two other small birds.

I kept a keen look-out for little stints, of which I have killed several on the river, but did not see any. During our passage down we found a few mussels on the walls, but, as they were very small, we did not linger very long over them.

We got to the last lamp on the north wall, and then anchored to await the flood. One of the sandbanks was covered with birds, and we were in hopes they would come our way when the tide took them off their legs. Unfortunately, they stretched away in another direction, so we did not get a chance.

We now got our anchor and pulled home, bagging a few birds on the way.

The next day the same party set out again in the afternoon to meet the tide. We had not got very far when my brother, whose first season this is, got a shot at a stock dove, which he dropped very neatly. It fell upon the mud, and, as we hadn't a dog, it was rather a disagreeable task to retrieve it. A cool breeze springing up, our passengers decided to land and walk home. After some delicate manoeuvring with their skirts, they succeeded in getting on firm ground, whilst we pulled down towards Longton Marsh.

For a short time we had pretty fair shooting. We saw several curlews, but they judiciously gave us a wide berth, and as there was no cover, we did not get a shot at them. A few ducks also passed wide.

I shot a ring plover, dunlin, and gull. The latter being placed on the sand, proved a good decoy, as my brother and Will got one each to it; the former also shot a dunlin or two, and the latter a ring-plover, &c. Our total was 15 birds, and singularly enough we each lost a winged bird. I could have got one, but was not inclined to venture very far for fear of being cut off from the boat, as the tide was now due.

On its arrival we re-embarked, and were soon back again, well tired with our three days on the river.

I am aware the above was a very poor kind of sport, but there was the hope of doing better, and we got plenty of fresh air and exercise, with good appetites, and something to talk about over a social pipe and glass of whisky on our arrival home.

On the 1st of September in the following year, from the boat the same company and our mutual friend, James Eastwood, of Oldham (who has since been with us many times) had a rather better day, getting 23 birds.

SEAFOWL SHOOTING ON THE RIBBLE (1896).

My brother Edwin and I had been down the river, along with his wife and daughter, on the last day of August, when we only shot ten birds, and got a thorough good wetting. His wife declared she would never go again. However, on the following Wednesday, about 6.30 a.m., she again accompanied us, along with another sister-in-law of mine. There is courage for you!—and it was attended with better luck than on the first occasion.

We proceeded to launch the boat—a most unpleasant task, as we had to shove her over a few yards of very soft mud, which was knee deep, and not remarkable for its ambrosial odour. Taking our passengers aboard, I pulled down the river, carefully looking out for birds. Before long a couple of stock doves flew over, one of which I dropped on the bank. It was soon retrieved, and again we got under weigh. Not long after my brother dropped a turnstone, which, falling in the water, was picked up without trouble. We landed several times, getting a few birds by this means.

We passed the wreck of a Norwegian barque, and it looked very lonesome lying on the south side of the river. I never pass this derelict without wondering what scenes the figurehead has overlooked before the final catastrophe which finished the vessel's career. Arrived at the Naze, we put our passengers ashore, and then pulled across for another shot on the south side near the mouth of the Douglas. I made a very bad shot here at a red-shank, which I missed with both barrels. Very little was to be seen, so we crossed the river, pulled a little lower down, and landed, leaving the boat so that she would keep afloat. We had a good breakfast at the inn, and after resting awhile, all the lot again embarked.

Drifting along the north wall, we quietly looked out for birds, and landed several times, generally increasing the bag on each occasion by at least a couple, mostly dunlin. We saw several curlews, but, as usual, they kept well out of reach. At length, the tide making, we turned about; and the wind being favourable, hoisted an overcoat for a sail, using one oar for a mast and steering with the other. We had now again a fair bit of sport among the dunlin. My brother landed and picked up a few, others being washed away by the tide. Whilst he was ashore, I dropped half a dozen from a small lot, getting four of them.

Being all aboard again, it wasn't long before we saw about a dozen birds of a larger species feeding on the north side. When

we got abreast of them, although a long way off, my brother let fly a charge of No. 1 shot, and dropped one, and the rest flew over the boat. I fired at one, which flew on, and then stopped, evidently only very slightly touched. I took off leggings, boots, and socks, and jumped ashore; but the bird had disappeared. However, I dropped a ring-plover, and picked up the first bird, which was a bar-tailed godwit. I had some difficulty in getting to the boat, as the flood was now coming up rather strongly, but at last managed it all right, and resumed boots, &c.

There was not any sport for a long time, and not wishing to arrive at our moorings before the mud was covered, we lingered on the way, though the weather looked very threatening. When nearly at our anchorage, my brother dropped a gull—a long shot. It came down just as I was saying “Too far,” thus making me a false prophet.

Our total bag was—1 stock dove, 1 gull, 1 godwit, 1 turnstone, 28 dunlin and curlew-sandpipers, 5 ring-plover, and another small bird. We got home about 6 o'clock, well satisfied with our outing.

The introduction of the gentler sex in some of these outings may be objected to as not being serious wildfowling. At any rate, the ladies enjoyed it, and possibly our own pleasure was enhanced by their company.

I have a vivid recollection of two occasions when my wife accompanied me. The first time she had one of the children in her arms, and we were sailing up the river (wind southerly) when the boom gybed, hitting her on the back, pushing her on her knees into the bilge water, keeping her there till I could pull the boom aft, and take off the pressure. She got in cold water, but I caught it hot.

The other incident was when out walking we found the boat afloat, without the usual mud to wade through, it being about high water. We embarked, and hoisting the sail, I steered with my back on the tiller, when a gull coming over I hit it hard with the first barrel. She called out, “Shoot again,” which I did, and after some dodging about picked it up.

This proves women can enjoy such outdoor sport as well as men. And the above incident is one of my pleasantest memories.

AMONG THE DIVERS AT PLYMOUTH (1904).

Being on a ten days' visit to my brother, located at Plymouth, I had taken my gun and 50 cartridges on the chance of a bit of sport. Somehow the shooting was put off until the last Saturday in February, the following Monday being the last day of the season.

Having arranged with a boatman to take us out for a couple of hours, we set off in the afternoon in a small boat from the Promenade Pier. I only took 25 of my cartridges, thinking they would be ample. We had one of the pier boys with us, to give him a treat, and he appeared to enjoy it as much as anyone.

In less than five minutes after leaving the pier I had four gulls down for about as many shots, which may be considered very good for a start.

Having a great longing to obtain a Great Northern diver, of which there were several flying about, I was lucky enough to secure one after firing three shots at it. I had hit it every time, but it dived most provokingly. After a few more shots we got within range of another, which was perched upon a large buoy. Taking the sitting shot the bird was evidently hard hit, but notwithstanding I fired six more shots, it eventually got away on Drake's Island.

We certainly had plenty of excitement in rowing after it every time it dived, but when it came up there was generally only the head and neck to aim at thirty or forty yards away, so no wonder, with the pitching of the boat and the small mark, it escaped.

I shot a couple more gulls, one of which my brother finished with the gun, and then turning to the lad, said "Could you do that, Sydney?" when the answer, in the quaint Devonian vernacular, was "You hit 'e in the eye, sir!" From the evasive nature of the reply, we concluded that the boy was not much impressed by the "sitting" shot.

Then I shot two guillemots, which now came up close to the boat, my total bag being six gulls and three divers.

Every cartridge being fired, and as it was rather chilly, we decided to return, being not far from the breakwater.

It was most tantalising to see the small divers coming up all round the boat, but one could do nothing only regret the other 25 cartridges left snugly at home.

We had a nice view of the s. yacht Hohenzollern, which is a large vessel painted white.

As we were only $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours out, and so near the end of the season, the sport may be considered good.

I noticed there was no recess in the stern of the small boats for "sculling" with a single oar as we have, and was surprised that the great Devonshire port should be behind us in the North.

One of the features of the Plymouth Pier was the roller skating which I enjoyed watching, especially a carnival, when the skaters were in fancy costume, such as Faust, Marguerite, Mephistopheles, &c. Although able to get along on the ice, I found on trial that it was quite different on the boards, and was perforce a spectator.

Some of the German Emperor's crew were having refreshments at the pier bar. They were fine-looking men, as one would expect the crew of such a vessel to be.

The band of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment were playing, and having a young man named Greenwood from Oldham to converse with, and now and then, when he could spare time, a word with my brother, I quite enjoyed myself.

During my stay I never missed a daily visit to Sir Francis Drake's statue, he being one of my favourite heroes. I noticed that he appears to be looking to the east instead of west, which is, I suppose, because the statue is a replica of one in another town.

The Armada Monument, and also the Citadel came in for a good share of attention, and these visits insured that the historic Hoe, with its beautiful views of Mount Edgecombe, Drake's Island, the breakwater, and even the Eddystone Lighthouse, was not neglected.

I could wish to think I have not seen it for the last time.

ROUGH PARTRIDGE (1877) AND GROUSE SHOOTING (1884)

On page 375 of the ninth edition of Hawker's "Instructions to Young Sportsmen," he says, referring to wildfowl shooting, "The usual way of sallying forth for this purpose is to drive to an inn on the coast, call the waiter, who recommends an honest boatman . . . and your day ends with a ten-pound bill, and perhaps bagging a couple of sea gulls."

Well, several years ago a party of three of us during a three day's out visited Longton Marsh in the first place, where we were invited to bring some pigeons, which rather mystified us, but when on our arrival we inquired the reason, and were told that it was to insure sport if there was nothing on the marsh, didn't we feel sold? There was nothing to be got, so we tramped to Preston station, and took the last train to Fleetwood. Next day one of the party went home, and the other two shot a sea gull and a sparrow respectively. The following morning we tried Blackpool, which was a blank. I am sure no member of the Order of Oddfellows, to quote my friend the punt gunner, could object to the number of slain.

I was describing the above magnificent out to a gentleman of my acquaintance a few days subsequently, when he kindly said he could have given us a rough day's partridge shooting if he had known. I at once said it was never too late for a good thing, and the consequence was that a short time after I was off by rail with a letter of introduction for the said shooting, which was not very far from Preston.

Not having a dog of my own at the time, I borrowed one from an old sportsman, the late Eli Lees, under whose tuition I had learned to shoot jacksnipes. This dog, which rejoiced in the name of "Gam" (game) was an excellent one for snipe, but for any other purpose—well, we shall see. On my arrival I was met by a person who seemed to combine the duties of farm labourer and gamekeeper. At any rate, with his long legs, he could get over the ground at a good pace.

After a good breakfast of ham, bread and butter, and coffee, seasoned with delicious cream, I set out with three men to beat several likely-looking places for hares. One place in particular, a rushy old pit, almost dry. We sent the dog in, but as nothing stirred and the dog came out we turned away, when, to our astonishment, an old hare bounced off and was almost out of range ere I could swing round and fire, which I did and missed. On turning back, we found the dog had been within a yard of the hare's form, but without detecting it.

Shortly afterwards a good covey of partridge got up wild, but we marked them down in a lane. I opened the gate and walked up to the place. The birds rose within nice range, but I missed with the first barrel. With the second, however, keeping on the same bird, I dropped him just as he topped the hedge. What a welcome sight the small cloud of feathers was, floating above the fence. Retrieving the bird, we went on, and I had several shots, killing a brace more.

After luncheon, I went out with one man only, and got another partridge, missing a snipe which got up from a pit; with No. 5's I bagged three hares. One of the latter got under a bush, and then there was a most unsportsmanlike race between self, the man, and the dog. We reached the place simultaneously almost; the canine, however, had rather the advantage, and grabbing the hare stuck like wax, and it was with some difficulty we could induce him to let go while we administered the "coup de grace" to the poor hare. The dog slunk away with his tail drooping, and was remarkably quiet the rest of the day. I finished by missing a partridge with both barrels, having, contrary to the man's advice, approached it in the face of the sun. As I got seven head out of fourteen fired at I had not done very badly.

After tea the man accompanied me to the station. I stood him a farewell drink, and returned home, very well pleased with my out.

Not having seen my friend Robert for some time it was with a very pleasant sensation that I received late one October his cordial invitation for a day's grouse shooting. I packed up gun and cartridges, and taking the train from Preston arrived in Oldham on the Friday evening at half-past six, and, after calling on a few friends, duly turned up at my host's house, accompanied by one of my brothers. We sat talking, smoking, and generally refreshing until a late hour.

At seven o'clock in the morning we got aboard the conveyance, along with Robert's father, Mr. Seville, Mr. Hulme, and two other gentlemen, making in all a party of seven. We had a pair of good horses in front of us, and the morning being clear the drive up to the moors was very enjoyable. Some of the party played cards on the way, but as I never would learn that accomplishment I was content with admiring the scenery and consuming tobacco. We saw plenty of grouse, and Robert and self having established ourselves beside the driver, were fully able to appreciate the charms of the heathery moors and the keen, fresh morning breeze. We arrived at the keeper's house, "Isle of Skye," before nine, and after partaking of a slight repast, set out for the batteries, having drawn cuts for places whilst in the conveyance.

Taking my stand, and placing a few cartridges ready, I charged the gun; and, leaning the barrels slightly on the turf in front, waited in great anxiety. What a while it seemed before anything occurred; then a couple of shots from my neighbour on the right, and a small pack of grouse flew across my front. I singled out a brace of the leading birds, and floored them right and left. A few more birds passed, out of shot; the beaters appeared in sight, waving their sticks; and then the drive was over.

The next drive I did not fire a shot. It began to rain, and we were much afraid of the fog rising; but, fortunately, it kept off. We had five drives in all, but I only fired in two of them. I had a couple of misses, and my last bird was killed just as the beaters hove in sight. In the last drive I saw my neighbour, Mr. H. kill a brace of birds at one shot. They had passed between us, when he swung round and dropped them. Poor fellow, it was his last shot, as in a few weeks after he passed over to the great majority.

And now two more of the party have gone to their rest.

During the day we had a good luncheon in the pavilion on the moor, the men getting their bread and cheese and beer in another hut. Our day's sport was but a poor one, as we only got $8\frac{1}{2}$ brace of birds, towards which Robert contributed a brace for a couple of shots. At the finish two of us had a long hunt after an owl, which one of the keepers had seen a few days previously, but we never got a sight of it. We had a good dinner at the house, and afterwards, by the aid of cigars and whisky, passed an agreeable hour or two. One of the company, a doctor, gave us "The Lass of Richmond Hill," accompanying himself on the piano, in good style. Soon the horses were put to, the lamps lit, and we were on our way home, where we arrived before nine o'clock.

The next day I dined with my friend, and we passed the time very pleasantly with smoking and conversing on old times; then, taking leave of my friend and his amiable partner, I came away highly pleased with my outing.

ROUGH SHOOTING IN VICTORIA, MELBOURNE,
GEELONG, AND THE DIGGINGS.

On the 12th August, 1869 (being 20 years old next day), I left Liverpool on the good s.s. "Great Britain," arriving in Melbourne on the 14th October following. The passage was made partly by steam and partly by sail.

After devoting the following day to sight-seeing, I made preparations for a walk with the gun. A fellow passenger, C. W. Preston, agreed to go with me, and accordingly we got the servant at the hotel to pack up for us some cold mutton (1½d. per lb.) and bread.

The next morning we got up early, and after polishing off a good breakfast, with such an appetite as only a "new chum" can boast of, we set out, accompanied by an old man who lived at the hotel, and who took us about five miles on the Heidelberg-road.

Almost as soon as we started it began to rain, but this did not damp our spirits. It takes more than a drop of rain to stop a fellow when he has had a couple of months on the water, and especially when there is a strange country to view and strange birds to be obtained. We crossed the Merry Creek and Darebin Creek, and though they are no larger than small brooks, yet as they are spanned by good substantial stone bridges, I presume there is plenty of water comes down their courses in the wet season.

We had a drink at a hotel, and then seeing some birds in an enclosure, I climbed over the fence and secured one of them. It was of a beautiful blue colour, with a rather long beak, and no doubt was some kind of kingfisher. I believe it was a "laughing jackass." As I picked it up, and smoothed down its plumage, I was much astonished to see a man rapidly approaching in quite the old country style. As soon as he got near enough he sang out, "No shooting allowed in this paddock." I begged pardon for trespassing, and informed him that I was a new comer, and did not understand the law.

This encounter was rather disappointing, as I had imagined I could go anywhere and blaze away at my own sweet will. Soon after I got another bird, and now our guide left us, so we were thrown on our own resources. We were left in view of Heidelberg, which is very prettily situated, but we did not enter the town, or village, as it would be called in England.

After wandering about among the trees (I can scarcely call them "bush" as they are so large and scattered) for a long time, and not getting any sport, we sat down beside a spring, ate our boiled mutton and bread, and indulged in a comfortable smoke. There we lay basking in the sun, and listening to the brook bubbling along over the stones. How we wished some of those at "home" were with us! Tired at length of inaction, we began practising with my revolver at trees, &c., and thus made away another hour, when we determined to look for more birds. We crossed the highway, and soon after got among a lot of martins, and I shot one. As near as I can remember, it was exactly the same kind as our English martin.

It had now got late in the afternoon, and as we had some distance to go, and there is very little twilight in Australia, we prepared to return. My companion began to be rather nervous as to finding the road, but I assured him that my bump of locality was pretty well developed, and that I had no doubt we should get back all right. I led the way, and very soon got to the road, where I shot another bird. It was a long way off, perched on a tree, when I dropped it. It was something like a pigeon to look at, but smaller.

It now began to rain again, and after triumphantly pointing out the way to my comrade, we put best leg forward and trudged on. We had not gone many yards before we came to a milestone, seven miles to Melbourne, meeting a man in charge of a horse and cart, and he was the only person we saw. We posted along until we reached another milestone, and to our dismay read eight miles to Melbourne! Quite disgusted, we turned to retrace our steps. All this time it rained very hard. I drank from a pool in the road, and farther on we begged a drink at a hut. We got back at six o'clock. I bagged eight birds, and my companion one.

My friend Standring and self were lazily chatting and smoking together one afternoon at our lodgings, when an acquaintance came in, and saluted us with "What the deuce are you fellows idling here for, when you might be getting no end of rabbit shooting?" "Where?" we both ejaculated in a breath. "Why, at Geelong, where I've just come from." Now, John and I were both rather keen about shooting of any kind, and as there appeared to be a prospect of sport we considered we were in for a good thing. It did not take us long to pack up, and in less than an hour we were down at the wharf. At four p.m. we started on the small screw steamer "Express" for Geelong, whither we arrived, after a pleasant sail, at 8.45 the same evening. We tramped to the Bridge Hotel, where we found a few acquaintances, and as we were very tired soon went to bed.

At 7 30 next morning we had breakfast, and afterwards, whilst Standing went to inspect some woollen works, I cleaned both the guns (double muzzle-loaders), and prepared for, as I fondly imagined, a good day's sport. At 10 o'clock we set out, and soon crossed the Barwon Creek Bridge, and after a five miles walk over a dusty road we arrived at the Geelong Racecourse.

Just previous to turning off the road, we observed a small flock of parrots settled in a tree. We cautiously crept up to the tree, and then stood up expecting the parrots to fly. To our amazement they simply looked at us, and when we tried to alarm them by making a noise it was all the same. There was nothing for it but to shoot them sitting. I dropped two and my friend one before they flew. One or two we left hanging by their claws to the branches.

Well, as I said before, we had arrived at the racecourse, where the rabbits, we had been assured, were positively swarming. We did not see one! There had been a flood a few days previously, and there was a thick deposit of mud all over the place, which was very swampy and wild-looking, and we judged the rabbits were drowned. My friend shot an Australian magpie, which I finished for him with my revolver.

We saw plenty of water birds, but even there they were as wild as at home, and we could not get any of them. We could hear the frogs croaking all around us in the loud and peculiar style Australian frogs adopt. Their noise was a positive nuisance. It was strange to see the large bills posted on the grand stand requesting pedestrians and equestrians to keep clear of the course while the Duke of Edinburgh and suite were upon it. We thought of the numbers of people who must have been present, and all the life and gaiety in that solitary place only a couple of months before. Now there was not a soul about besides ourselves.

We next went to the swamp and fired several shots, with varying success, at different species of birds. Setting out on our return journey, we came across the tree where we had been shooting in the forenoon. We discovered one or two parrots lying dead at the foot of it, their grasp having relaxed. I shot a few more parrots (green and Rosilla) in the same tree. Perhaps there was something peculiar about that tree, for again they sat there while we brought them to the ground like knocking fruit down.

As it was late in the afternoon, and we could not see any prospect of getting any rabbits, we started again, and eventually arrived at the Bridge Hotel. We called in for our luggage and then walked on to the station, just in time to see the train leave. We sat down and counted our game. I had got ten parrots, one

"miner," one martin, and one bird similar to our titlark. Stranding one magpie, four parrots, and one titlark. We found rooms at an hotel, and the next morning returned by the "Express" to Melbourne.

On the 2nd of November following, I and a couple of friends took a cab from our lodgings to the station. The cabs in Melbourne were queer two-wheeled concerns. They were open vehicles, and the passengers sit back to back over the axle. There is a framework of hoops, which in wet weather is covered and closed in by waterproof canvas. The charge was only 3d. per mile, but then the cabman could pick up passengers who might be going the same way as yourself. At the station I was joined by a young man from Oldham, as per previous arrangement. We took railway tickets to Sandhurst (Bendigo), a distance of 100 miles.

There was nothing much to see on the way except a very large flock of sheep. The country was bare and flat, and very uninteresting. There are, however, a few mountains covered with trees. We saw no game. The name of one of the stations, "Duck Ponds," was very suggestive, but no ducks did we see.

We were from three o'clock until eight in doing the journey. Arrived, we took a cab to the Noah's Ark dining-rooms, where we stayed the night. Next morning, at 7 30, we got up, and after a good breakfast went for a walk in the reserve or park, where we looked around us, but there was very little to see—a very muddy creek, plentifully bordered by weeping willows, being the main feature of the place. We ascertained that the coach for Tyler's Flat Diggings, on the Berlin Rush, did not start until the following morning. The streets, cabs, &c., were same as those of Melbourne. The kerb "stones," I noticed, were of wood. I may observe there was no coal burned in Sandhurst.

At half-past eleven the following morning we left by "Cobb's" coach for a 40-mile ride through the bush. The coach had leather springs and no glass in the windows. It was drawn by two horses. I rode part of the way inside and part outside, but either place the mosquitoes were equally troublesome. One of the passengers was a Chinaman, of whom there are great numbers in the Australian colonies. The "road" was all through trees or bush. In fact, we could see nothing but trees with one small opening in front, where the road disappeared on the horizon. Slight showers of rain fell at intervals, and frequently we had to drive amongst the trees, the high road being in such a bad state. It was, of course, nothing but a track made by levelling the bush. Twice we changed horses. At the first stage I went a little way in the bush, and having put my gun together, I tried to stalk a bird. As it kept just out of range, I tried a bullet at it, but, as usual, with such a missile, managed

to miss it. Only just, though. We passed through Inglewood, which is a small town built of wood, and after traversing a track a trifle worse than before, as we had to wind in and out amongst the trees, none having been cleared, we arrived at Tyler's Flat at half-past five. We found out an acquaintance, and then took up our quarters at the Tyler's Half-way House.

Next morning I awoke with a severe cold, caused, no doubt, by the canvas walls of our apartment admitting a draught. I know they flapped about considerably. Discovering a dead rabbit near the "hotel," I began to think there would be some sport, but it was the only rabbit I saw. I came across a person from Manchester, who took me down his "claim." He gave a bad account of the diggings, and said it was a fortune or nothing. We afterwards went to meet an acquaintance at the Pelican Hotel, after which I occupied the remainder of the day in writing letters home. We stayed at the Criterion Hotel; all these hotels are mere shanties, built of wood, and one storey in height.

In the morning we went to the saw-mills, and afterwards I took my gun and went shooting. My success was very moderate. Kangaroos there were none, and all I got was five green parrots and five miners. The latter are brownish-coloured birds about the size of a thrush, but not near as pretty. I suppose they derive their name from frequenting the diggings, where they are very tame. Some lads who followed me were made happy by giving them the birds. In the evening we took a walk round the place. It was quite a little town with main street, containing ironmongers', chemists', and other shops, all built of wood.

The district is bounded by hills covered with timber. On the flat were numerous holes, in fact it looked like a large cemetery with all the graves open. There were heaps of whitish-coloured earth around the holes. This was the "wash-dirt," or "bottom," from which the gold would have to be washed. Several men were engaged in this operation near the creek, which was, as usual, in Victoria, spanned by a strong stone bridge. As night fell, I sat under a tree enjoying my pipe, and wondering what my friends were doing at home. In the morning I went along with some other people part way to "Uncle Tom's Gulley," where there was a "new rush."

After dinner I took my gun and went shooting. I got to a place where there were a lot of skulls and bones of cattle, &c., and here I saw a good many Australian magpies. These birds are somewhat similar to ours, but perhaps a trifle larger. They are frequently kept in confinement, and seem to be always whistling one tune, viz., "There is nae luck about the house." Evidently that tune must be very popular or very easy to learn.

I shot four parrots and four miners, and then sport ceased. I had a great desire to get one of the magpies, but they were too wary for me. At last I stood still, and after a while I observed a magpie drop behind a log and begin feeding. As soon as it was properly settled I crept on hands and knees to another log which lay within range of the first one, and there I squatted until the unsuspecting magpie stepped out from its cover. I was ready with the gun barrels poking through some twigs, and I instantly laid the bird flat. Its stuffed skin, along with some of the parrots, I brought home and presented to a much-respected clerical friend.

All the birds I killed at this place were shot sitting. The trees are so high that in their flight from one to another the birds are almost perpendicular over your head, and again, though the trunks are wide apart, yet the foliage of one tree frequently touches its neighbours. I do not remember to have had one fair chance for a flying shot.

The following morning we got up early, breakfasted with one of our acquaintance in his tent, and at 7.30 took the coach to Sandhurst, where we arrived, after being very much tormented by mosquitoes, at 2.30. We managed to catch the three o'clock train, and arrived again in Melbourne at eight o'clock the same evening.

I left Williamstown on the 4th December, 1869, on the ship "Loch Awe," of Glasgow, via Cape Horn, arriving in London on the 10th April, 1870. Head winds and calms caused the long voyage.

NOTES ON VARIOUS BIRDS.

It is strange, even in the present day, notwithstanding the many and cheap works on natural history, what an amount of ignorance exists as to the various species of birds, their habits and haunts. Even the very names of all but the commonest species are unknown to many people. It must, nay it does, add very considerably to the pleasure of a walk in the country to know a little of the characteristics of the feathered tribe.

Whatever innocent object takes us away from the crowded town to the healthful country, must exercise a beneficial influence on both body and mind. And what an attraction there is in the water side, when the mist of morning is rising like a veil from the face of the stream, just where the sun has shown his face when all nature is fresh and cool. And when at noon the same sun pours his fiery beams upon the element below, making it look like a mass of molten metal, is it not pleasant to recline on the grassy bank or loll lazily in a boat enjoying the "*dolce far niente*?"

Again, when the tide comes rolling up under the light of the broad, harvest moon, throwing a silvery sheen over the heaving mass, who that has beheld the sight, and not worshipped the God of Nature? Two thousand years ago the tide rolled in bearing on its bosom the "Pict and painted Briton" in his coracle, just as now we are borne along under the same moon.

THE CORNCRAKE.

Much oftener heard than seen, and yet frequently seen by those who have the patience to watch. It makes its appearance towards the end of April or beginning of May, when its harsh cry may be heard all day, but especially at morning and evening. Perhaps a good deal depends on the weather, as it seems to come later when there is a cold backward spring. On its first arrival it is easily decoyed by means of an instrument somewhat similar to the old-fashioned watchman's rattle, or by the back of a knife being drawn over the edge of an old saw or a strong comb. Of course, you are in ambush. After calling a few times, to which the bird will probably reply, there is an interval of silence, when you call again; the silence continues, your patience is, perhaps, almost exhausted, when suddenly the snakelike head and neck of

the bird are protruded from a tuft of grass only a dozen yards away. At times it may be seen within a few feet, calling vociferously with neck outstretched, swelling throat, and its breath congealing on the early morning air.

THE CURLEW.

A most wary bird. I have somewhere read that seven are as many as a man can kill in a lifetime. I know I've only accounted for seven. Curlews vary very much in size, and it is not known whether age or sex is the cause. The shrill call of the curlew is well known, and not difficult to imitate. Provided one is in ambush and armed with a "call" they can be decoyed within shot. There is a peculiar charm about the curlew and a few other of the water birds. Its wildness, and the dreary swamps which it frequents, affect the imagination strongly. When, after a long stalk, a successful shot has been obtained, who has not felt—

"Where now is doubt
Or disappointment? For the day we bid
Defiance to their pow'r, and yield our soul
To all the fulness of successful sport."

"Fowling," a poem, 1808.

GULLS.

The "common" gull on the Ribble is the black-headed species. In its white summer plumage, with its black head, orange beak and legs, and white tail spread out like a fan, it is, when hovering over the water, a striking picture. Frequently scores may be seen quite close to the town, flying to and fro where the sewers debouch into the river. About the middle of July the dark feathers on the head change to white and a black band develops on the tip of the tail. By the 1st of August the transition is about complete. In March the breeding plumage is re-assumed. Many people think that one set of birds goes away and is replaced by another kind, so rapid is the change in plumage. The young birds are of a speckled brown colour.

The common gull proper is not plentiful. It is larger than the preceding species, and may be described as brown and white in colour.

There are many species of gulls, and much uncertainty about them, even amongst people who are otherwise pretty well up in ornithology. This is to be regretted.

THE HERON.

What a world of romance hangs around this bird. In days gone by the falconer's noblest game, the hawk's highest quarry.

How, in old times, the good long bowman, kinsmen of those who won at Crecy, must have quietly stalked the long-necked bird, and when the whistling shaft had pierced its body, proudly placed its plumes in his cap. But woe betide the wretch who, unqualified, destroyed a heron. In this respect, at least, the old times were not good. In those days birds must have been much more numerous, and previous to the invention of guns much more difficult to secure. There was one great advantage, though, about the bow and arrow. When the sportsman missed his mark frequently, owing to the absence of noise, there would be an equally good chance for another shot; that is, of course, when the bird was not in flight to begin with. It is almost to be regretted that guns were ever invented. The only really necessary use for them is to destroy dangerous animals.

But to return to the heron. In Craven's "Young Sportsman's Manual," there is a beautiful steel plate from a painting by G. Lance, engraved by J. W. Archer, of the heron. The bird is flying with its legs outstretched over a desolate-looking marsh at eventide. The head, with pendent plume, is drawn back; the long, sword-like bill pointed forward, and is strongly suggestive of a Lifeguardsman rushing forward to the charge. The picture has haunted me for years, and caused an intense longing to outwit and win one of these birds—a longing so far ungratified.

I have, however, been present when one was shot opposite Guide's House, and it deserves more than a passing reference. We were pulling to the side of the river purposing landing for refreshments, when Lyons called out, "There's a heron." Looking over my shoulder, I sang out, "There are two of them," and round went the boat towards the opposite side. The herons, meanwhile, played about in the air, and finally settled behind the wall. As we neared them the oars touched the bottom, and the boat's keel grated on the sand. Still I forced her on, and it was hard work, as there were five of us. Suddenly L. jumped up, and let drive with both barrels. The first told, and down came the heron with a broken wing, in the back water on the other side of the wall.

L.'s spaniel, a wonderfully clever dog (who literally "earns his master many a pound") dashed at the bird, which, as the dog approached, opened a beak like a pair of scissors, and twisting round his neck, faced the dog on every side so that L. had to give it another shot, when the long neck drooped, and the dog dragged it to us. The other bird wisely decamped.

THE KINGFISHER

The most beautiful little bird we have, at least as regards plumage. Our bird, too, is brighter in colour than tropical birds

of the same tribe. It is not uncommon on the Ribble, and its vivid blue back and red breast are most beautiful when, on a bright sunny day, it darts by like an arrow. Its call is very loud and shrill, and has a peculiar weirdness, so that once heard it is not soon forgotten.

In old times the kingfisher was supposed to either influence the weather or be influenced by it. The latter, doubtless, is correct enough, both with kingfishers and human beings. At any rate, the little bird's skin was suspended from the ceiling, and then it was thought the bill would turn the way the wind was to be expected from. I think Sir Humphrey Davy refers to this in his "Salmonia; or, Days of Fly Fishing," a quaint old book.

The kingfisher sits on some low twig over-hanging the water, or on a stone by the river's edge, from whence it darts down on the small fish below, and, once within its long bill, small chance has the finny prey to escape.

THE KNOT.

Sometimes seen in immense flocks. It is scarcely necessary to refer to the traditional fondness for them displayed by King Canute. It may or may not be true they were named after the King, but it is one of the good old tales we prefer to believe. I once succeeded in capturing a knot alive by stealthily approaching it, and on its taking flight knocking it down by a blow from a walking-stick!

THE LAPWING.

Green plover, black plover, peewit, teuit, or pewit. A most numerous species of fen bird, both inland and on the shore, and wherever there is marshy land. Few people are aware of the numbers that flock to the river on a windy night. Just at dusk they come, sometimes in hundreds, and so low as almost to brush against the expectant gunner, it being customary to wait concealed in some ditch. This sport is called *fighting*, and is generally, according to books, followed in connection with duck shooting, but according to one's own experience the lapwing is the principal game of the *fighter*, whatever may have been the case in the days of Hawker, Lacy, Folkard, and other eminent votaries of wild fowling.

THE MOOR HEN.

Water hen—a genuine water bird, frequenting both streams and pits, where it is an attractive object, as it glides along the surface of the water with the sun shining on its bright red crest. Some time ago, when "calling" landrails in the early morning, a water hen came quietly walking across the grass, and only

took to flight when quite close. It appeared to be anxious to investigate where the noise came from. It afterwards proved to be remarkably good eating.

THE OWL.

On the 13th September, 1888, I was fighting for lapwings, in company with two other persons. It was just 7.50 in the evening, and was dark, when one of the party fired. Soon after, on asking what he had shot, he produced an eared owl, which he had shot in mistake for a lapwing. Whilst standing together another of the party suddenly remarked, "That's a bird!" when, catching a glimpse of a wing, I threw up the gun "at a venture" and fired. With but faint hopes of any tangible results, I proceeded in the direction of the shot (a horizontal one), and 60 yards away picked up a fine barn owl. These were the only shots fired that evening.

Singularly enough, the third person in the trio secured an owl in a similar manner, at the same place, a few weeks subsequently. Anyone who will examine an owl's plumage will see how well adapted it is to the bird's nocturnal habits and silent flight.

THE ROOK.

Crow. A great many people have an idea that a young rook eventually grows into an old crow, but, of course, this is a mistake, as a rook is always a rook, whether young or old. To distinguish the rook from the crow, some persons tell you that the former bird has a white skin round the nostrils, whilst the latter has a lot of bristly hairs. This is true enough, but as the young rook has the bristly hairs, how are we to distinguish between it and the crow?

The best plan, according to Mr. E. C. Booth, is to look inside the mouth, that of the crow being flesh colour, and that of the rook slate colour. I believe this is the case at all stages of the respective birds' existence. The rook is a sociable bird, as is proved by its congregating to build. It seems to be somewhat singular that, notwithstanding the annual attack which takes place on its young in most rookeries, that it should still frequent the neighbourhood of human habitations.

There is a good old tale of a young student who was in the habit of dropping rooks with a crossbow from the window of his chambers. A learned professor, whose quarters were close by, frequently seeing the birds drop suddenly from the trees without apparent cause, conceived the idea that they were subject to the falling sickness, and actually wrote a treatise to that effect! The air-gun was also formerly used to kill rooks, but on account of its complexity and liability to burst whilst pumping is now seldom

seen, a small-bore breech-loading rifle having taken its place. Everyone will have noticed the abhorrence which rooks manifest towards a gun, which, while doubtless to be ascribed to their sharp sight and instinct, has caused the saying that they can smell powder.

I have used the crossbow the last three seasons for killing rooks, and also last May (1908) shot with the air cane gun. But I prefer the crossbow.

THE COMMON SNIPE.

A favourite bird with most sportsmen and epicures. It has a very rapid, and, for a short distance, most zigzag flight. Few people have seen a snipe on the ground. Its colour is so similar to the withered herbage amongst which it sits that it requires a very sharp eye to distinguish the bird. It generally frequents moist land, where it can probe into the soft earth, where it finds the succulent worms which impart such a delicate flavour to its flesh. It is eaten with the trail inside, so that the consumer enjoys to the full the "diet of worms."

As regards getting snipe, they are both captured and shot. The former is done either by horse-hair nooses or by a draw-net. Shooting them is rather a difficult feat, and no bird gives more satisfaction when it is cut down in mid career. When the weather is frosty and the ground covered with snow, the snipe frequents the running streams.

There is a good picture in Craven's "Recreations," before quoted, of "The Wounded Snipe," by A. Cooper. The bird lies on its breast with wings stretched out on the snow at the edge of a dark pool.

THE JACK SNIPE.

Not so plentiful as the common snipe, except in a few places. This bird is much smaller, and the bill shorter than the latter. It is rather handsomer, too, in its plumage, and is considered even rather better eating. It lies very close, and is fond of old pits and drains. Generally, only one or two are found in a place, but as soon as killed another may be looked for on the following day. It is reputed even more difficult to kill than the full snipe, but provided the sportsman has very small shot, say No. 10's, he will find it easier to knock down than its larger confrere, especially if he takes a snap shot as soon as it rises—the best plan for all snipe.

STARLING.

Another common bird, and one that would be esteemed beautiful if it were not common. When young, it is of a uniform dull brown colour, then changes to deep metallic green with white spotted

breast, and finally the white spots disappear and the breast assumes a purple tinge. The starling is a most useful bird, and consumes an enormous quantity of grubs, &c. During the day-time it feeds in the fields, but at dusk assembles in flocks and seeks a roosting place in some plantation, perhaps miles away. In the morning at an early hour the birds leave their lodgings, usually in one immense flock. Of course, this is in the autumn and winter.

Although rather bitter to the taste, some people are very fond of them. Colonel Hawker says, "Having swept down some dozens with your duck gun, let their heads be immediately pulled off, as this will in a great degree prevent their having a bitter taste." It was in November, 1825, in a reed bed at Alresford, that the colonel killed 500 starlings at one time, using both barrels of his double punt gun with a pound of No. 8's shot in each barrel. Probably such a shot has never been exceeded.

The following paragraph will, doubtless, interest many readers as showing the immense flights of birds which frequented this neighbourhood in former times. It would be more interesting still if one knew the kind of birds they were:—

"On the 28th of August, 1736, a man passing the bridge over the Savock, near Preston, Lancashire, saw two large flights of birds meet with such rapidity that one hundred and eighty of them fell to the ground. They were taken up by him and sold in Preston market the same day."—"Hone's Every-day Book."

Savick Bridge was rebuilt in 1904 by the Lancashire County Council.

HINTS ON SHORE SHOOTING.

I.—CHOICE OF A GUN.

For the benefit of young shooters who take an interest in shore shooting, I purpose making a few remarks, which I hope will prove useful and interesting.

At the same time, I trust they will pardon any repetition of detail with which they may be already well acquainted.

First we will take the gun.

I have tried all bores from four to twenty, and after an experience of over 40 years have come to the conclusion that, taking every purpose in view, nothing will beat a 12-bore.

Let it be a fairly heavy gun, say 7½lb., and full choked in both barrels, which had best be 30in. long. Bar locks (rebounding, of course) are the best looking, but back action locks make the strongest gun, and are more watertight. In a muzzle-loader the bar locks make the strongest weapon.

See that you have three-pin bridles, as these work so much sweeter. It is difficult to explain what three-pin bridles are, but they generally work with a solid sear, and you can take the lock to pieces and put it together again with much less trouble than with the common bridles.

The double-grip under-lever is the strongest action. For wear I prefer it to any top-lever. There is no spring to break, and if the action gets loose with wear you can easily tighten it yourself.

Of the top-levers the one with Greener's cross bolt may be considered the best and neatest.

In any kind of gun a simple doll's head is of little, if any, use.

Let your stock be rather straight, as it is much better to shoot a trifle high, when your shot will drop and may hit the bird; but if your stock is too much bent, and you shoot under, you are bound to miss.

Low hammers look the best, though it is doubtful whether they assist aiming. They do not make it more difficult, at any rate, and are less liable to get broken.

Some contend that the hammers shewing on each side are a guide to the eye. I really don't think they make any difference, as when firing one usually does not see any hammers at all.

Either steel or English damascus barrels are to be preferred. Examine them carefully for flaws, which are difficult to detect in a new gun.

It is foolish to pay a large sum for a weapon which has to be exposed to all kinds of weather, and especially to the sea spray. This takes the polish off in no time.

As regards hammerless, my own opinion is that the Anson and Deeley is the most reliable, and any gunmaker who has not got his own peculiar patent will tell you the same.

Now for a few words on cartridge loading. If you desire full charges in brass cases have the wadding of such thickness as will bring the top wad within 1-16th of an inch of the end of the case, which you can then turn over in an ordinary machine. By this plan the cartridges are much pleasanter to handle than when crimped, and the cases last much longer, there being no crimps to split. It is not advisable to use any kind of cases too many times, as they swell and are apt to strain the gun.

You can, however, get a deal more use out of the cases by using a re-sizer, which may be purchased for about 1s. 6d. But a much more effective one may be made out of an old flat file by softening and then drilling a hole the exact size of case, after which the file must be re-tempered. Those sold are not long enough in the handles, which should be, at least, 5in. on each side. Charge your cartridges in the proportion of 3dr. powder and 10z. shot, using as much more as you comfortably can. For choice Schultze or E.C. in the first barrel and black in the second.

You will find that moderately small shot tells best in the long run. Generally I use only 5's and 9's, which I wear in a belt, the 9's on the right side and the 5's on the left. Thus they do not get mixed. The belt is, perhaps, the slowest mode of loading from, but it distributes the weight nicely and keeps the cartridges dry and—as before remarked—separate.

I make my own cartridge belts, using leather for both belt and loops, the latter being fastened with brass wire. They are very neat and strong.

A loose gun sling is easily made. The gun must be attached to a loop of leather by a small loop for the barrels, and either a short strap and buckle or a leather lace and noose for the grip. If you simply buckle a strap to the grip and barrel, leaving it to play up and down the latter, you will find it tighten across the chest most uncomfortably when carrying the gun on your back.

When cold and tired the sling is most useful, as it enables the hands to be thrust in the pockets. I have shot without taking off the sling several times, and killed, too.

II.—ACCESSORIES.

I have observed a criticism or two about using small shot. All I have got to say is that I much prefer it for the smaller waders to any other size. Strip a dunlin of its feathers, and it is a very small object.

With regard to No. 5, both our local gunmakers (old-established firms) assure me they sell more of it than any other size. I have tried all sizes, and speak well of the bridge that's carried me over.

Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey says that No. 5 suits a 12-bore best of all.

Now for impedimenta, &c. It is always as well to carry about 25 yards of water cord (when you have not got a dog) for retrieving purposes. To this cord may be attached either a folding wooden grapnel or a straight stick 18in. to 2ft. long, with a string from end to end, and your line fastened to the centre of the string, after the manner of the belly band of a kite. You can with a little practice throw either of these beyond a bird up to 20 yards distance, and thus draw it gradually to the side.

Be sure to get water cord, or your line will kink as soon as it gets wet, and give you no end of trouble. Also put your foot on the end of the line or you may throw all the lot in the water, as I once did, thus losing a whole ball of twine.

A good glass is useful. Of course, a binocular is very handy, and if a good one is by far the best.

The best extractor is the springclip, which may be purchased for about 1s. 6d. at any gun-maker's. It also comes in useful occasionally as a pair of tweezers. And it will fit any size of gun.

I have not overmuch faith in calls, and I have tried many. The landrail call, made after the manner of a watchman's rattle, is very effective as a rule, but once in every four or five seasons the birds refuse to listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.

Another call very easily made is the green plover or lapwing call. You take a piece of linen tape about one-third of an inch wide, and stretch it tightly lengthwise across a bit of tin $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 1in., and tie it there. Then take another piece of tin $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 1in., place it flat on the tape, and bend it over the other piece, overlapping half an inch at each side. Press it very firmly down with your pliers, cut off the knot and superfluous tape, open out the tin a little in the centre, so that it does not press on the tape, which latter moisten, and blow away, trying to imitate the call of a bird. You will soon succeed in making a good imitation. This call is quite as effective as those sold in the shops, and much more convenient, as you can keep it in the mouth and have both hands at liberty. It may be made of sheet silver or German silver, and will then last a long time.

Of course, in using this or any other call you must keep out of sight. And there is a far greater chance of success when practising on a solitary bird than on a number.

A landing net for use aboard a boat is easily constructed, and will be found of great service. An old angling net does very well, still many people like to make their own tackle, and those may proceed as follows:—Make a ring either of cane or willow,

galvanised iron, or brass wire (copper is too soft), and attach it to a stout ash rod five or six feet long. Then if you can net, all you have to do is to make a net and attach it to the ring, leaving it to bag a little. Any fisherman will shew you how to net in a few minutes. Cloth might do, but it holds water; at a pinch you could make use of it, punching it full of holes with a wad punch.

A folding rod for knocking out sticking cartridge cases, when the extractor has torn off part of the base, or when there may be some obstruction, such as mud or snow, in the gun barrels, is sometimes of real service. Such rod can be made out of three pieces of light flat iron rod loosely rivetted together after the manner of a metal two-foot rule.

Of course, I don't mean to say that every time one goes out he has to carry all these things. If he did, sport would be a burden indeed, unless kept aboard a boat.

If you go in for preserving birds some newspapers and cotton wool should be taken. It is no encumbrance to carry a little of the latter always, as one never knows what may turn up, and birds once stained, especially with the liquid from the eyes or brains, are very difficult indeed to clean.

I always skin my own birds, but seldom mount them, i.e., put wires in and fix in an upright or other natural (?) position. I prefer a skin to represent what it is, and not a grotesque effigy, which is what most amateurs succeed in making—myself included.

However, if you want a few as trophies, you can fold the wings across each other, and bring them up to a point behind, cross the feet, spreading the webs and also the tail, and thus tack to a board or wall until dry, when you can stitch the wings together, tie the legs, and the bird will retain its attitude, looking very effective either hung against a wall or used as a fire screen. In the latter case the legs will require wiring and fixing to a board.

To preserve skins use equal proportions of burnt alum and saltpetre, and occasionally wash them with benzoline. Corrosive sublimate and methylated spirits are better as a preservative, or arsenic and soft soap, but I do not care to dabble in poison. Some of my specimens are several years old, and have kept very well so far.

Feathers can be cleaned by washing with soap and warm water, afterwards applying a mixture of Plaster of Paris and water, laid on and allowed to dry, and then beaten off with a piece of wire or stick.

If badly shot or kept over long, a bird can still be preserved by clearing the passage to the stomach with a pencil or a pen-holder, and carefully dropping pure carbolic acid in till it reaches to the root of the tongue.

STRINGING THE CROSSBOW.

I do not suppose anything is known with certainty as to the origin of the crossbow. Some authorities favour the idea that it was a development of the ballista, which it certainly resembles.

But the motive power of the ballista was two separate arms, worked by twisted cord or sinew, similar to the apparatus with which the carpenter tightens the frame of his bow saw.

My own idea is that there was a want felt for some weapon which did not require the long time which had to be devoted to acquiring the necessary skill to shoot accurately with the long bow.

The only books I have seen bearing on the crossbow are Daniel's "Rural Sports;" Hansard's "Book of Archery," published in 1841, and now to be procured second-hand at a few shillings; Blaine's "Rural Sports," quoting from "Daniel," with an illustration; and Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey's "The Crossbow," published in 1903 at £3 3s.

With regard to the second-named work there is a very interesting chapter on the crossbow, but mostly historical. There are several good steel plates in this work, from which some idea of the ancient crossbows can be formed.

Sir R. Payne-Gallwey's work is almost exhaustive, both historical, practical, and modern, and enables anyone with mechanical genius to construct reproductions of some of the older patterns. I may say that I have made two kinds from the book, one to shoot bolts, and the other to shoot ball.

I think it is a pity that Sir Ralph did not make the book smaller in size, and less in price, so that it might have attained the popularity it deserves.

Many people who possess an old crossbow may not be able to string it, and of course few gunmakers can do the work, the art being almost lost.

Generally, when an old bow is picked up, either the string is gone or it has stretched till it is useless from age.

Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey uses twine for the stringing, and writes me that he finds gut to stretch too much. I have only seen one bow with a twine string, and, like the gut, it had "gone." However, I do intend to try the twine some time.

For the benefit of anyone who cares to attempt stringing, I will give the system I follow, and which I had partly from a friendly gunmaker of my acquaintance. It would not be fair to copy the lucid and long directions from "The Crossbow," and of course the price of the work is somewhat prohibitory.

To begin, get a piece of wood, any kind will do, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick by about 3 in. wide, and in length just $\frac{1}{2}$ in. short of the distance from the outside of the horns of the bow. This $\frac{1}{2}$ in. is to allow for stretching, and to ensure the bow string fitting tightly. Now procure two hanks of clock gut of about the thickness of the "tail" gut of a violin. These hanks cost about 9d. each. Wind one lengthways over the board, joining the other on as near one end of the board as you can. Tie an ordinary reef knot, taking care to leave 3 in. of the gut at each side of the knot. Finish off by joining the other ends in a similar knot. It does not matter if both knots happen to come at the same end of the board, but it is better not to have them exactly alongside each other, as that would make the end bulky. You will now have a hank of about eight strands of gut. Previous to taking it off the board, wind any kind of soft twine temporarily all round it about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. between the turns. Now you can take it off the board, and put it on the bow.

This is rather an awkward job unless you have clamps and a bastard string (for which see directions below), but it can be done by fixing the bow in its stock, to a bench or a plank by iron hooks, one at each side of the bow, and then taking a strong rope, or, better still, some soft thick iron wire, and attaching it to the bow as near each extremity as you can, but not within the horns. Then bore a hole at a suitable distance in the bench or plank; take a strong iron bar, and, using it as a lever, bend the bow by the rope or wire till you can slip your gut hank on the horns.

If you use a wire bastard string, and can wedge it from slipping up the bow, you may have it quite short, and can bend the bow by its own lever; or you can fasten a hand vice at each extremity of the bow, and fix your wire or bastard string to these. If you use a bar, let it be a strong one. I once bent an old musket barrel to the form of the letter "S" in getting a string on.

Bastard string clamp, with bolts and "wing" nuts, about $\frac{1}{4}$ size; two are required.

For the string make a hank of 25 strands of 4-ply flax netting twine, with a loop or "eye" worked at each end to be slipped on the hooks. The string is now 50 strands between the loops, and continuing from them for an inch or so, and again in the centre for two or three inches, it is wrapped with whipcord. By having a couple of spare "S" links, the string can be made short and lengthened at will.

Get a ball of hard whipcord about the thickness of a "D" fiddle string, also a piece of bees wax. Begin wrapping with the string (well waxed) about two inches from the centre, and continue four inches. To fasten, place a loop of string on the wrapping and wind over it, say, eight turns, then pass the end of the whipcord through the loop which pull up tight, and thus draw the cord under the last eight turns. Then make a single knot, and cut off close. Do this at both top and bottom of the hank. Take a piece of good soft leather, the thickness of a strong boot top. I have used a piece of soldier's buff belt, which answers very well. It must be $\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide and quite 3 in. long. With shoemaker's waxed thread stitch this across from one hank to the other, where the ends of the leather overlap the hank, being towards you.

Next take a piece of wood one inch diameter—I use a brass fishing rod ferrule of that size—and winding some of the whipcord round the wood or brass former and each side of the top of the bow string make a loop of, say, twelve strands. Wind soft thread round each of these so as to keep them separate. Withdraw the "former" and wrap round for a permanency with whipcord, joining them in the centre for about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. This can be done by starting at the right-hand top corner facing you, going singly about $\frac{3}{4}$ in., then taking up the bottom loop for $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Afterwards single on the top loop, finishing at left-hand top corner. Next begin at left bottom corner, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. single, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. double, finishing with $\frac{3}{4}$ in. single at bottom right corner. Thus you have a four-cornered sling or cradle at the back of the leather loop, and doubly armed with whipcord in the centre. I believe it was customary to do this wrapping diagonally, but I prefer the above method.

A stretcher or cross-tree, full size; two are required.

Take the "stretchers" or "cross-trees," which are small pegs of ivory, brass, or copper, about $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. long, including a $\frac{1}{4}$ in. recess at each end. These are placed equidistant, one on each side, from the sling and the ends of the bow. They are of various patterns. They can either be turned in ivory or brass, or filed from copper wire. Let the top and bottom strands of gut be divided equally

and the stretchers be wedged in and wrapped fast to the string, beginning $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the place they are to be fixed and continuing $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. past, fastening the ends of the whipcord as before.

Having fixed these, take off the bow string by the same means that you got it on, and commencing, say, 4 in. from one end with top of bow string wrap singly $1\frac{1}{4}$ in., then take in bottom of bow string and bring it to the top, taking both together for $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. Proceed singly to form the eye of the string, making a knot at each turn in this part for strength and ornament. When you get to the part where the top and bottom are joined go over it again, finishing with $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. single on the lower string.

Put a thick leather washer over each horn of the bow, and get the string back in its place by the same means you got it off. It will be rather more difficult, perhaps, as the various whippings, the stretchers, and the leather washers will have shortened it somewhat. Should the string be rather short, either omit the leather washers or let them be very thin.

Of course, you make everything as tight as possible, and the work will take probably five or six hours. In the old time the charge for stringing was 7s. 6d., which, considering the work and cost of material, was very reasonable. If your bow has not got a string at all, try to get to see one at a museum. When properly adjusted the bullet crossbow is very accurate, and it is easy to hit a penny at ten paces with it. The foresight is a white bead on a black thread or horsehair stretched across the "grains," as the serrated forked foresight is termed, and by raising or depressing or turning to right or left the sight can be very finely adjusted. The backsight is a leaf with about four pinholes about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. apart. If you find you can use the lower one you can leave all the holes open to get different elevation. But stop any that may be too low with beeswax.

I use a bullet of 40's gauge. The crossbow is much more effective for rook-shooting than a spring air-gun, the ball being so much heavier, though even with the bow it sometimes takes a few shots to knock the bird out of the tree.

A few words of caution are necessary as to using the bow. If it be one with a stock similar to a gun with a spring hook at the extremity of the butt, be sure to hear the lever catch before you take your hand from it. A friend of mine, nearly 40 years ago, neglected this, and taking off the pressure of his hand the bow flew up to meet the lever, when one fork of the grains struck him in the nose and there broke off, penetrating an inch and leaving about the same amount standing outside. This he seized and tugged out. Fortunately, it was not his eye or forehead, or he would probably have been killed. As it was, the wound healed all right, and he is still well and hearty.

Never keep the bow long bent, and never discharge it without a ball in the sling.

Should the spring inside the lock of the bow be broken, to make a new one, take a suitable piece of clock spring, which heat to cherry red, cut to width, and bend to shape. It will take several heats to do this. To temper, fix a piece of wire to the spring. Again heat, and plunge into either sperm oil or tallow. Then hold in the fire till it blazes all over, and as rapidly as possible wave in the air till cold.

Put the V part of the spring pointing forwards, or it may break. The bow can be worked without the spring, but is not so safe.

I shall be very glad to answer any questions, and explain anything that may not be quite clear.

RECIPES.

TO BROWN A GUN BARREL.

One ounce nitric acid in one pint of water, and one ounce green copperas in four ounces of water. Mix the two solutions, and put them in a glass stoppered bottle.

Clean the barrel perfectly bright. Do not touch with the fingers, and apply the mixture with a rag attached to a stick. When dry, scratch with a piece of "card" wire. Repeat the process four or five times, and finally polish with beeswax and turpentine.

TO STAIN AN ASH GUN STOCK.

Make a strong decoction of logwood chips with boiling water, and apply two coats of this—hot for choice. Then two more coats of a mixture of green copperas and water, and two of bichromate of potash and water, each made in a similar manner to the first mixture.

Let every coat dry before applying the next, and finish by rubbing on raw linseed oil with the palm of the hand.

VIOLIN VARNISH.

For the fiddle makers. Oil aniline dye of any desired colour can be mixed with good oil varnish, which must be warmed. A little Japanner's Gold Size will help it to dry.

This is as good as the "amber" varnishes advertised, and much cheaper.

All recipes, &c., given have been proved many times by myself.

SHOOTING LIBRARY.

"Instructions to Young Sportsmen in all that Relates to Guns and Shooting." By Lieut.-Colonel Peter Hawker. Ninth edition. Published by Longmans, at £1 1s., in 1844. Illustrated by steel plates and woodcuts.—The ninth is the best and fullest edition. The last edition was the 11th, issued after Colonel Hawker's decease, and edited by his son. This copy I have had, also several others. Very few people have seen the first edition. I once possessed it. It is a very small volume with very large type; the headings to each section being in black letter.

Of course, Hawker was out of print long ago. It can, however, generally be bought at 10s. to 12s. 6d. I once saw a splendid copy of one of the earlier editions with the plates beautifully coloured. Anything said in praise of Hawker is superfluous. His ideas about game laws are very good in some respects; in others very severe.

"The Modern Shooter." By Captain Lacy. Published 1842, by Whittaker and Co., at £1 1s. Illustrated by woodcuts, and one very good steel plate of the author's dogs, Rodney, Bob, and Jerry. This is a very good book, and like Hawker, original, except as regards punt guns and punting. Here Lacy, as the Colonel says, hired Buckle, who spun out his deposition while the Captain took it down. Buckle was an old puntsman of the Colonel's. Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey does not care for the illustrations, but as for myself, I think them very amusing. Note the one, "Foundation and Elevation." If the pictures do not elucidate the text they enliven it, and the captain's jokes are to the point.

The book is rather scarce, I think, as I have only seen six copies, four of which have passed through my hands. I consider it well worth 10s. od., though I have secured copies for less and larger amounts.

"The Wildfowler." By H. C. Folkard, Esq., originally published, I believe, by Piper, Stevenson, and Co., at £1 1s., but the latest edition is issued by Longman's, at 12s. 6d. The first edition, if I remember, contains some strictures on double-handed punting, which are now omitted. Mr. Folkard claims to be the first person to give a practical account of decoys. The steel plates are very beautiful, but one or two of them have done

duty elsewhere, as I have seen them amongst a collection of old prints with different titles. "The Wildfowler" is a good book, and well worth its cost.

"The Fowler in Ireland." By Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, Bart. Published by Van Voorst in 1882. After this work, we may almost consider the subject of woldfowling exhausted. The plates are very good indeed, and make one long to be out on the water. The working of decoys, building punts, &c., are explained by a master hand, whilst the accounts of snipe shooting in Ireland and plover netting—Sir Ralph's own adventures—are very interesting.

"Shooting and Fishing Trips in England, France, Alsace, Belgium, Holland, and Bavaria," by "Wildfowler," "Snapshot," second edition, Chapman and Hall, 193, Piccadilly, 1878, with two illustrations by Vincent, Brooks, Day and Son, Woodbury Type, price 8s. This book contains 440 pages of absorbing interest. I well remember when I got my first copy, first edition, in two volumes, that I was caught in a shower coming home, and was in such a hurry to read the book that instead of changing my clothes I simply undressed and lay in bed reading.

I have had the second and third series, published at 21s. each, and enjoyed reading them very much. They are, however, scarcely equal to the first series, as they are more leavened with dog and sea-fishing lore.

The Badminton Library: "Shooting," by Lord Walsingham and Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, Bart., with contributions by the Hon. Gerald Lascelles and A. J. Stuart-Wortley, with numerous wood illustrations by C. Whymper and others. Published by Longman's, 1886, in two volumes, "Field and Covert" and "Moor and Marsh," price 10s. 6d. each. The illustrations, of which there are about 100 in the first volume and 60 odd in the second, are very good. The shooter who wishes to be "au fait" in shooting matters, should procure both volumes. By the way, there is a woodcut of Sir Ralph, in fowling costume, in the second volume.

"Rambles After Sport; or, Travels and Adventures in America and at Home." By Oliver North. Published at the "Field" Office, 1874; price, I think, 6s. A very good book. The first chapter, entitled, "A Week's Duck Shooting at Poole," contains 25 pages of a very interesting nature; punting, sailing, and flighting are well and graphically described. Further on, some of the author's American Experiences, especially the bear shooting in California, are very amusing and exciting. Another book shooters should possess. It can be read over and over again.

"The Idstone Papers" on sport and things in general, by "Idstone" (Rev. Thomas Pearse, who died at Bournemouth, 24th September, 1885), published by the "Field," 1874, at 7s. 6d.

Another good book, and one to be kept, as it will bear reading more than once.

"The Young Sportsman's Manual, or Recreations in Shooting," by "Craven," illustrated by steel plates and woodcuts. Published at 5s. by Bell and Daldy, 1867. The steel plates, nine in number, chiefly after A. Cooper, R.A., are equal to those in "Folkard," whilst the cuts in the text are also good. The plates—"The Wounded Snipe" and "The Heron"—are indelibly imprinted on my memory. A book to be kept.

"Public Shooting Quarters." By "Wildfowler." (Published at 2s. 6d. by Horace Cox, "Field" Office, 1881.)—A very useful book to all who like changing the venue of their sport. To those who prefer staying at home the book is almost equally interesting.

"Short Sketches of the Wild Sports and Natural History of the Highlands." By Charles St. John. (London: John Murray, price 2s. 6d.) Contains a few illustrations. One of the most interesting books in existence to both sportsman and naturalist. The book is full of exciting escapades among the wild denizens of the Highlands. It is written in a simple and yet fascinating style, and is worthy of comparison with White's "Selborne." There is a very handsome illustrated edition published at 15s.

"Wild Sports of the West." By W. H. Maxwell, author of "Stories of Waterloo." London, Bentley. This copy contains a steel plate, and several small quaint woodcuts. The book is very amusing, as all Maxwell's works are, and I have read it with pleasure many a time over. Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey speaks of it as one of the most interesting sporting books ever written.

"White's Natural History of Selborne." Bohn's edition. Illustrated. One of the best copies of this well-known work. It is entirely unabridged. The notes are written by Edward Jesse.

"Shooting." By Robert Blakey. (A new edition with illustrations. G. Routledge. Price 1s.)—Almost entirely copied from "Blaine's Rural Sports," and with hardly any acknowledgment. Nevertheless, the book contains a great deal of useful information. Probably first issued about 1850.

"Fowling." A poem, descriptive of grouse, partridge, pheasant, woodcock, duck, and snipe shooting, 1808. A very spirited description of the above sports in blank verse. Mr. Folkard quotes extensively from it for the headings to his chapters. Rather scarce; worth about 6s.

"Colonel George Hanger to all Sportsmen, Farmers, and Gamekeepers." The following references to wildfowl occur on title page in list of contents. "To catch whole flocks of wood-pigeons in hard weather, and all water-fowl in any weather." . . . "To shoot wildfowl, pewits, golden plover, wild geese, and bustards by night." Published 1814. Price 12s. A very "curious" and quaint work. Worth probably 5s. or 6s.

"Hints on Shore-Shooting," with a chapter on Skinning and Preserving Birds. By J. E. Harting. (Published by Van Voorst, 1871. Price 3s. 6d. With frontispiece and tailpiece.)—A small book, but a good one.

"The Deadshot," by "Marksman." Longman's, 1860. Contains a few illustrations, firing positions, &c. It would be difficult to beat the directions as to aiming, which are given in this practical work.

"An Encyclopedia of Rural Sports," by Delabere P. Blaine, with over 600 woodcuts by R. Branston. Longman's, 1852. Price about £1 1s. A very full and comprehensive work, with a lot of interesting reading.

"Facts and Useful Hints Relating to Fishing and Shooting." Edited by I.E.B.C. Horace Cox, 1867. A few illustrations and some useful information.

"The Sportsman's Directory and Park and Gamekeeper's Companion," by John Mayer. Simpkin, 1845. Contains quaint cuts and recipes, 181 pp.

"Confessions of a Poacher." Edited by John Watson, illustrated by James West. Leadenhall Press, 1890. Published at 2s. 6d. The third chapter of this book, "Graduating in Woodcraft," is intensely interesting.

"The Gamekeeper at Home," by Richard Jefferies, illustrated by Charles Whymper. New edition, Smith Elder, 1892, published at 5s. It is utterly impossible to say too much in favour of this author. He may be imitated, but cannot be excelled. His early death was a great loss to the ranks of nature lovers.

"The Amateur Poacher," by R. Jefferies. New edition, 1903, Smith Elder. An earlier edition of this work revived my liking for the crossbow and the flint-lock, since when I have shot rooks with crossbow, air cane, and spring-air rifle, and killed a corn-crake with a flint-lock blunderbuss, and a gull flying with an Oriental flint-lock pistol.

"Letters to Young Shooters," 2nd series 1892, 3rd series 1896, by Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, Bart. Both these books are well and plentifully illustrated. The third series is the best practical wildfowl book that I have or ever had.

"An Illustrated Manual of British Birds," by Howard Saunders, with about 360 cuts (Yarrel's). Published by Gurney and Jackson, 1889, at £1 1s. Probably the best cheap work on this subject.

"A History of British Birds." Part I., Land Birds; Part II., Water Birds. The figures engraved on wood by T. Bewick. Two volumes, Newcastle, 1809. Very quaint tailpieces.

"Broadland Sport." Written and illustrated by Nicholas Everitt, 1902. An interesting work, which makes one long to be at the Broad. Published at 12s.

"The Diary of Colonel Peter Hawker," with an introduction by Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey. Longman's, 1893. Two volumes. Few people would suspect that the Colonel was almost as great an authority on music as shooting. He was a strong man physically and intellectually, and a great enthusiast.

"The Birds of Lancashire," by F. S. Mitchell, second edition. Revised and annotated by Howard Saunders, with additions by R. J. Howard and other local authorities. Illustrated by G. E. Lodge, Victor Prout, &c. Gurney and Jackson, 1892.

"Remarks on Shooting," by W. Watt, 1835. A small humorous rhyming book on the subject.

"The Art of Wildfowling," by Abel Chapman. "Field" Office, 10s. 6d. Well illustrated, but the folding plates are objectionable. The two pictures, "Geese Beyond the Power of Man" and "Curlews in the Gloaming," are very good.

"The Wildfowler in Scotland," by John G. Millais. Longman's, 1901. This large and expensive work is the best illustrated wildfowl book I have seen. The literary part is also very interesting.

I have also possessed scores of shooting books besides the above, and there are several which I hope to obtain.

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The author will be happy to advise readers on any subject referred to in this work.

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