

THE GUNNERS

A Day's Sport With the Wild Fowls on the Gulf Coast—Duck Shooting at Its Best—Down South.

New York Sun.
The houseboat skittered in Bayou Marie, moved by a stout rope to the trunk of a live oak whose green branches overspread her deck. Smoke curled from the funnel of the galley where Alphonse was at work.

Two miles below the Mexican Gulf coast, the Louisiana coast. The blue waves creamed white in the winter sun and a wind that traveled ten miles an hour but had no sting in it came from the southward.

Out of the sea horizon lines of them stretched, leading inward to the daily feast. They came V-shaped to lessen the air resistance and each flock was headed by its oldest male member.

He overheard the solemn monkish group of Canada geese on the foreman gander was 50 years old if a day. Lower down, but still far out of gunshot, mallards went by, headed by a male of the same age.

Pintails and bluebills swept in, guided by leaders of experience, and the rule held good even to the mass of green-winged teal too numerous to assume the proper formation, hurrying by with the speed of a mile to the right and back a mile from the sea was a marsh which contained pools of fresh water and in the pools were weeds on which grew a black bean attractive to ducks. The hoarse clamor of wild fowls came from it.

It was a great sight from the deck of the steamer, for the sun hung two yards above the horizon and breakfast was not ready. Even at the distance, the beating of the myriad wings put a tremor in the ear and the rays of light flashing upon the wings showed all the hues of a painter's palette.

As the flocks of a hundred yards high, or a mile high, rushed above the marsh they half-shut their wings and dropped downward with quickening swiftness, settling slowly. It was the old, downy new, miracle of aerial flight made without effort and almost without volition and envy in the breasts of the marsh water over head and shoulders and stood rubbing himself with a coarse towel.

The ducks counted fourteen varieties of ducks since came on deck, he said. "They're coming in fast this morning. We'll have to talk to them after a while."

Alphonse poked his white woolly head above the companionway, saying: "M'sieur, d'jeuner, saying: 'They went below to a southern breakfast of coffee strong enough to stain the sides of the cups, broiled bacon, broiled birds, hot biscuit, waffles with various sauces. The Doctor, who has the purse of the party, with the tastes of Lucullus, dined on jacksnipe brains on toast. The brains of 50 snipe went to make his repast and he pronounced it good. Then pipes were lit and they hurried into rubber boots as canvas shooting coats.

Their guns are as various as the men. The Farmer, who is a Louisiana planter and the host of the party, had a gun which belonged to his grandfather. It was made in France in 1840 and was originally, of course, a muzzle-loader, but has been changed to a breech-loader with hammerless locks.

The barrels are of 14-gauge and 34 inches long. They are of a beautiful threaded metal, so soft that it can be cut easily with a pocket knife. Indeed, they were once 36 inches long, but near the muzzle were worn to the thickness of lettuce leaves and were cut off.

The stock, of finest English walnut, is straight without the pistol grip and scrolled and carved. On its left side, near the butt, is an inscription in dog-Latin, the letters filled in with silver: "Legere et scribere paragon est sed optime colligere est Del," which is translated freely as "Reading and writing may be had of the schoolmaster, but a crack shot is the work of God." It is very old-fashioned, this gun, its cylinder-bored from breech to muzzle, is too long for modern likes and balances badly in unaccustomed hands, but it shoots with marvellous strength, making an evenly distributed, close pattern, and the Farmer is deadly with it. Because of the softness of the metal and his use of smokeless powder, the breech swells badly after a hard day's work and he puts in wooden plugs of proper gauge and length.

The Farmer thinks a great deal of the gun because his grandfather imported slaves spoke of rifles and slugs and his father used it on deer and woodcocks up to 1861, when he went out with a Louisiana regiment against the men of the north and was killed in his first battle. His grandson and son is wont to extol the merits above the merits of the new weapons and back himself with it for money, marbles or chalk.

A wonderful field shot is the Farmer, with an instinctive judgment of wind, speed and distance and he knows to an inch just how far and strongly the old double-barrel will shoot. To watch him as a liberal education and to spend a week in a blind with him, or in tramping the brakes or marshes, is to become one of the elect.

He is of the old school of shooters, too, believing in the use of big shot for big birds and he does not think that No. 8s are sizeable for giraffes. He uses No. 2s for mallards, canvasbacks and redheads, No. 4s for other ducks of medium size and feathercoats and No. 6s for the smallest he will allow for teal. Also he asserts that the shot for the wild goose is the "low moud" buck-shot.

A gangplank a foot wide ran from the houseboat to the bluff bank of Bayou Marie and the party stepped over it one by one, the pockets of the men sagging far down with the weight of the shells. That day was one of the clear ones when, though the wild fowls are in millions, the shooting is hard because the wind keeps the birds on the water or in the weeds.

They got up promptly when they saw the men get up at long distances, but did not circulate much, and waiting in the blinds was not productive. Ducks in such a wind get a terrific attitude readily and then travel with fierce speed and the shot are blown a good deal and the pattern widened, all of which things must be allowed for.

The marsh was long by a quarter mile wide and the little pools were thick through it, each pool holding ducks. It was plain that such a gangplank as they got would come from walking them up, making chances on far rises. The Doctor and the Engineer took one side of the marsh, leaving the other for the Farmer and the Journalist.

They did not notice at first that the Farmer took the seaward side of the marsh. When they did notice it five minutes later they chuckled and said: "The ducks fly nearly over the marsh before they pitch and there are more of them on this side."

That was true, but it was also true that the strong wind was blowing straight from the sea. The first birds they flushed were three dusky mallards which got up 50 yards in their front and 10 yards out in the marsh and went straight away across the marsh, rising, of course, against the wind, as all birds do. They both shot at the

mallards and not a feather fell.

As their guns cracked a black swarm arose and rose against the wind, and rose away over the Farmer and his companion. The ducks were not more than 40 yards high when they passed above the couple, and the Journalist turned loose both barrels. Missus was impressed by the seven blue-bills came raining down. The Farmer had disdained to shoot. "The Engineer grinned at the Doctor.

"First blood for the opposition," he said. As they went on making as little noise as possible, they flushed every 30 yards or so, but all rose some yards out and all went straight away against the wind. By the time the Doctor and the Engineer were up their guns the birds had added ten yards to the distance and were still climbing.

Realization came to them that they were in for a hard time, but they refused to surrender hope. They could hear the guns of their opponents and now and then see a duck fall. The Engineer had bagged a half-dozen birds themselves and believed their luck would change.

With a splash and a squawk a badly frightened mallard drake leaped high and far away. Its initial spring carried it 20 feet in the air. With the wind bearing against its breast it stood almost on its tail in the air.

They could see its green head flashing like an emerald in the sun and the reddish feathers at the base of the neck and the beautiful blended hues of the back, wings and tail. They could even see for the instant the little curled feathers at the end of its neck.

It was a shot which the Farmer would have made with the right barrel in two seconds and thought nothing of it. The old gun would have jumped instinctively to his hand and the barrels would have hidden all of the bird except the very top of its head and it would have gone dead, hit hard about the middle.

But the Doctor shot under it with his right and a yard to one side with his left, because the drake was both climbing and spiraling, and the Engineer shot away under with both barrels. The drake went against the wind, yards high it went against the wind, badly frightened, its wings beating tumultuously putting 90 miles an hour behind it.

The Doctor followed it with another gun. Then they were conscious of the farmer had dropped to the ground opposite them and the Journalist had imitated him.

A single puff of smoke rose from the clump of weeds hiding the Farmer. It looked to be an impossible shot, yet the drake's wings shut spasmodically and it whirled over and over in its descent, a dead long before its plump body struck the sort edge of the marsh. The Doctor drew a long breath and said:

"There's something in that No. 2s theory sure. That was rain shooting on the wind-blown marsh, with the fowls showing black against the sky and the thunder of the surf close by and the fresh wind with the taste of salt in it. There is something in sitting in a blind when birds are thick and butchering them with right and left barrels and such a thing as walking them up, when the wariness of the swift creatures and the cover in which they hide and the wind are all in their favor, and the latter much more closely approaches true sport. That day the houseboat party got duck shooting at its best, not too numerous, and the Engineer and Doctor drew a long breath and said:

The rival pairs met at the end of the marsh and the scores stood: Farmer and Journalist, ten mallards, eight bluebills, three sprigs and five teal; Doctor and Engineer, one mallard, two sprigs and ten teal.

Alphonse gave them a good dinner that night—gumbo flet reddish stuffed with oysters, roast mallards dressed with peppered olives, a salad, cheese and black coffee; but what is a dinner to men who have to rise from table and scrub fannel shirts stiff enough to stand alone? In the yellow light of the oil lamp the Doctor and the Engineer, humped over the table with old-fashioned washboards, scrubbed and scrubbed, while the Farmer, at ease on the divan, smoked elegant cigarettes, and the Journalist, sucking a cob pipe, bowed and recited them reams of his own poetry.

NEW YORK'S JEWELRY DISPLAY.

Magnificent, Dazzling Sights That Royalty Can Hardly Match.
New York Sun.

A sight that impresses, even astonishes, strangers in New York—strangers from foreign lands as well as from other parts of the country—is the magnificent display of jewelry at the opera, the theatre, the fashionable restaurants, at every place, in fact, frequented by the public.

At the Metropolitan Opera house in particular on a regular subscription night coronets, tiaras, collars, neckties, ropes, centures, stomachers, dazzling in their brilliancy are as plentiful as it made of glass and do not take the eye of a connoisseur either to see that millions of dollars are represented in them, or, for that matter, in the jewels alone which shine from the boxes bordering the horseshoe. The sight is certainly well worth seeing and one of which New York ought to be more or less proud. But as a rule a liberal education and to spend a week in a blind with him, or in tramping the brakes or marshes, is to become one of the elect.

The fact is that so gradually year by year has the splendor of it increased that New Yorkers are slower to appreciate than are strangers. It is a thing that can hardly be outdone the world over. The New York woman's opera manners may leave something to be desired, but her jewelry, nothing.

It was only the other night that a traveler of undoubted authority, lately returned from visiting some of the largest capitals of the world, remarked concerning the jewels shown at the Metropolitan:

"No where else on earth can it be equalled. Even London and Paris are not in it with New York."

"Fortunately," asserted a jewel specialist, "American jewelry is made of fine jewels and they are now among the best customers of the trade. Nothing but the very best satisfies them."

"I do not say that there are not people on the other side of the ocean equally appreciative of the trade, but that just now there seems to be fewer women of the younger generation in Europe with big sums of money to spend for ornaments than there are over here."

"Then, as I have already hinted, a favorite medium whereby the Americans make known their riches is by precious stones. Almost invariably the 'big things' an American woman wears is a large sum at her diamonds does is to buy some diamonds. Later she may turn her attention to other jewels but diamonds always lead."

One of the best known experts in precious stones in this country made two interesting statements the other day: first, that more diamonds have been imported into the United States in the last two years than were mined in two centuries previous; secondly, that during the year 1901 more precious stones were sent to New York than reached here from 1850 to 1866 or in any two years since.

"For this reason," he added, the export from a commercial standpoint fine jewels are not a bad investment, considering that there is no other commodity, unless it is gold, which at a good price will more nearly bring its purchase price.

"Buyers of pearls during the last ten

years are at a disadvantage. Never than they are right now, which means, of course, that they have not depreciated in value. Feminine fancy for the time being runs to strings of pearls rather than to set collars—strings which lengthen out to ropes according to the elasticity of the purse of the man or woman who places the order. It is estimated that \$25,000 to \$30,000 is paid cheerfully every day for strings only large enough to go around the neck. Some of the ropes cost as much as \$200,000, and one ten feet long which I finished a few weeks ago for a New York woman, cost \$400,000. It is not every day though that an order like that is placed.

It is pretty well understood that many of the costliest necklaces and strings of pearls now extant are owned by Americans; but perhaps it is not so well known that each of these necklaces, in fact and string of large, round, matched pearls, represents something of the great wealth of the most famous pearl fisheries of Oriental countries and of the jewel marts of the world by experts who spend their time doing nothing else.

With a knowledge of this kind, it is as much the custom to have certain rare pieces of jewelry made to order as it is to order a dress suit, a carriage or a yacht. Customers who can pay make a strong turn for exposition, and are usually didactic. All Englishmen are. If they are not preaching themselves they like to listen to some one who is.

It is a habit not without its unfortunate side. It leads Englishmen at times to address an audience as though they were professors lecturing a class. One detects in some of them a note of pomposity or condescension that Americans would not have plenty of opportunity to address an audience as though they were professors lecturing a class. One detects in some of them a note of pomposity or condescension that Americans would not have plenty of opportunity to address an audience as though they were professors lecturing a class.

They have not the flexibility of French orators, and are nothing like so well versed in the mechanics of their craft as Americans. The latter feel the pulse of their audience more exactly, are more quickly sensitive, and, being in absolute sympathy, with those in front of them, have a freshness and ease and colloquial persuasiveness that Englishmen rarely master. Their touch too is lighter and more deft.

On the other hand English speakers are more restrained and possibly more thoughtful; they are much more logical on reason and argument than on declamation. But as they mostly have the national habit of spoiling sound ideas by a prosy and pointless way of putting them, this does not count so heavily in their favor as it should. I have sat under scores of orators in both countries, and my general impression is that Englishmen give you more and enter you more than Americans, considering the risk of being instructed at an English meeting and more often bored. In America there is not much danger of either fate—none at all, indeed, of the latter.

IN AFTER DAYS.
In after days when grasses high o'er top the stone where I shall lie, Though ill or well the world adjust, I shall not question or reply, I shall not see the morning sky; I shall not hear the night-wind's sigh; I shall be mute, as all men must.

But yet, now living, fain were I That some one then should testify, Saying—"He held his pen in trust To Art, not serving shame or lust." Will none? Then let my memory die In after days!

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passed. Rich Americans are now too well known on the other side to be left unnoticed for long, consequently while in other lands attentions and invitations descend upon them almost as fast as when at home, and as the American woman invariably wants to dress well wherever she goes, her jewel case now goes along with her, and in it are some of her finest jewels.

"Strange as it may seem, seldom or never are any of them stolen, and the only worry their owner is apt to have during her outing is when she confronts the customs officers when she lands again at this port."

Orators of Two Nations.
Harper's Weekly.

The men who enter parliament and the men whom you find on the platform have for the most part received the best education that England can supply. They are, therefore, naturally disposed toward a fairly high standard of oratory, a stately and dignified standard, at any rate. Also, they come to their quarters with their subject. Their speeches are packed full of meat. They excel in concrete, precise work, and are not afraid of dry details. They rarely generalize, and one may say they are never florid or bombastic. They have a strong turn for exposition, and are usually didactic. All Englishmen are.

If they are not preaching themselves they like to listen to some one who is. It is a habit not without its unfortunate side. It leads Englishmen at times to address an audience as though they were professors lecturing a class. One detects in some of them a note of pomposity or condescension that Americans would not have plenty of opportunity to address an audience as though they were professors lecturing a class.

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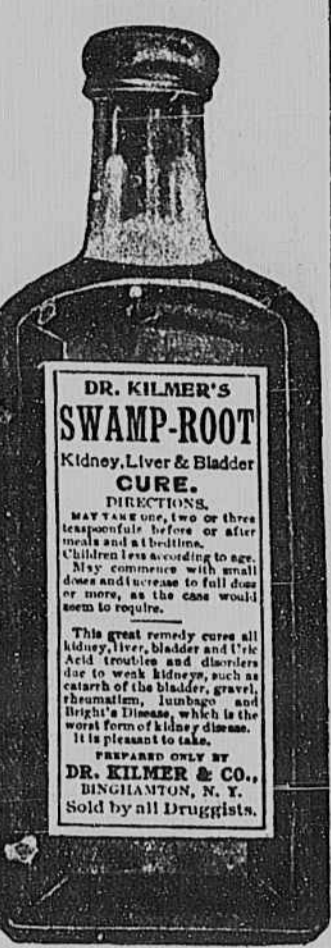
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