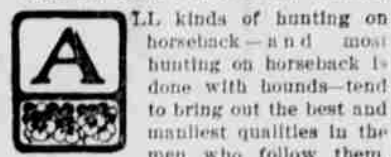


HUNTING DEER ON HORSEBACK

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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ALL kinds of hunting on horseback—and most hunting on horseback—is done with hounds—tend to bring out the best and manliest qualities in the men who follow them. and they should be encouraged in every way. Long after the rifleman, as well as the game he hunts, shall have vanished from the plains, the cattle country will afford fine sport in coursing hares; and both wolves and deer could be followed and killed with packs of properly-trained hounds, and such sport would be even more exciting than still-hunting with the rifle. It is on the great plains lying west of the Missouri that riding to hounds will in the end receive its fullest development as a national pastime.

But at present it is almost unknown in the cattle country; and the ranchman who loves sport must try still-hunting—and by still-hunting is meant pretty much every kind of chase where a single man, unaided by a dog, and almost always on foot, outgenerals a deer and kills it with the rifle. To do this successfully, unless deer are very plenty and tame, implies a certain knowledge of the country, and a good knowledge of the habits of the game. The hunter must keep a sharp look-out for deer sign; for, though a man soon gets to have a general knowledge of

the kind of places in which deer are likely to be, yet he will also find that they are either very capricious, or else that no man has more than a partial understanding of their tastes and likings; for many spots apparently just suited to them will be almost uninhabited, while in others they will be found where it would hardly occur to any one to suspect their presence. Any cause may temporarily drive deer out of a given locality. Still-hunting, especially, is sure to send many away, while rendering the others extremely wild and shy, and where deer have become used to being pursued in only one way, it is often an excellent plan to try some entirely different method.

A certain knowledge of how to track deer is very useful. To become a really skillful tracker is most difficult; and there are some kinds of ground, where, for instance, it is very hard and dry, or frozen solid, on which almost any man will be at fault. But any one with a little practice can learn to do a certain amount of tracking. On snow, of course, it is very easy; but on the other hand it is also peculiarly difficult to avoid being seen by the deer when the ground is white. After deer have been frightened once or twice, or have even merely been disturbed by man, they get the habit of keeping a watch back on their trail; and when snow has fallen, a man is such a conspicuous object deer see him a long way off, and even the tamest become wild. A deer will often, before lying down, take a half

circle back to one side and make its bed a few yards from its trail, where it can, itself unseen, watch any person tracking it up. A man tracking in snow needs to pay very little heed to the footprints, which can be followed without effort, but requires to keep up the closest scrutiny over the ground ahead of him, and on either side of the trail.

In the early morning when there is a heavy dew the footprints will be as



The bullet had broken the backs of both.

plain as possible in the grass, and can then be followed readily; and in any place where the ground is at all damp they will usually be plain enough to be made out without difficulty. When the ground is hard or dry the work is very much less easy, and soon becomes so difficult as not to be worth while following up. Indeed, at all times, even in the snow, tracks are chiefly of use to show the probable locality in which a deer may be found; and the still-hunter instead of laboriously walking along a trail will do far better to merely follow it until, from its freshness and direction, he feels confident that the deer is in some particular space of ground, and then hunt through it, guiding himself by his knowledge of the deer's habits and by the character of the land. Tracks are of most use in showing whether deer are plenty or scarce, whether they have been in the place recently or not. Generally, signs of deer are infinitely more plentiful than the animals themselves—although in regions where tracking is especially difficult deer are often jumped without any sign having been seen at all.

Although still-hunting on foot is on the whole the best way to get deer, yet there are many places where from the nature of the land the sport can be followed quite as well on horseback, than which there is no more pleasant kind of hunting. The best shot I ever made in my life—a shot into which, however, I am afraid the element of chance entered much more largely than the element of skill—was made while hunting black-tail on horseback.

We were at that time making quite a long trip with the wagon, and were going up the fork of a plains river in Western Montana. As we were out of food, those two of our number who usually undertook to keep the camp supplied with game determined to make a hunt off back of the river after black-tail; for though there were some white-tail in the more densely timbered river bottoms, we had been unable to get any. It was arranged that the wagon should go on a few miles, and then halt for the night, as it was already the middle of the afternoon when we started out. The country resembled in character other parts of the cattle plains, but it was absolutely bare of trees except along the bed of the river. The rolling hills sloped steeply off into long valleys and deep ravines. They were sparsely covered with coarse grass, and also with an irregular growth of tall sage-brush, which in some places gathered into dense thickets. A beginner would have thought the country entirely too barren of cover to hold deer, but a very little experience teaches one that deer will be found in thickets of such short and sparse growth that it seems as if they could hide nothing; and, what is more, that they will often skulk round in such thickets without being discovered. And a black-tail is a bold, free animal, liking to go out in comparatively open country, where he must trust to his own powers, and not to any concealment, to protect him from danger.

Where the hilly country joined the alluvial river bottom, it broke off short into steep bluffs, up which none but a Western pony could have climbed. It is really wonderful to see what places a pony can get over, and the indifference with which it regards troubles. In getting up from the bottom we went into a wash-out, and then led our ponies along a clay ledge, from which we turned off and went straight up a very steep sandy bluff. My companion was ahead; just as he turned off the ledge, and as I was right underneath him, his horse, in plunging to try to get up the sand bluff, overbalanced itself, and, after standing erect on its hind legs for a second, came over backward. The second's pause while it stood bolt upright, gave me time to make a frantic leap out of the way with my pony, which scrambled after me, and we both clung with hands and hoofs to the

side of the bank, while the other horse took two or three complete somersaults as I ever saw, and landed with a crash at the bottom of the wash-out, feet uppermost. I thought it was done for, but not a bit. After a moment or two it struggled to its legs, shook itself, and looked round in rather a shamefaced way, apparently not in the least the worse for the fall. We now got my pony up to the top by vigorous pulling, and then went down for the other, which at first strongly objected to making another trial, but, after much coaxing and a good deal of abuse, took a start and went up without trouble.

For some time after reaching the top of the bluffs we rode along without seeing anything. When it was possible, we kept one on each side of a creek, avoiding the tops of the ridges, because while on them a horseman can be seen at a very long distance, and going with particular caution whenever we went round a spur or came up over a crest. The country stretched away like an endless, billowy sea of dull-brown soil and barren sage-brush, the valleys making long parallel furrows, and every thing having a look of dreary sameness.

At length, as we came out on a rounded ridge, three black-tail bucks started up from a lot of sage-brush some two hundred yards away and below us, and made off down hill. It was a very long shot, especially to try running, but, as game seemed scarce and cartridges were plenty, I leaped off the horse, and, kneeling, fired. The bullet went low, striking in line at the feet of the hindmost. I was very high next time, making a wild shot above and ahead of them, which had the effect of turning them, and they went off round a shoulder of a bluff, being by this time down in the valley. Having plenty of time I elevated the sights (a thing I hardly ever do) to four hundred yards and waited for their reappearance. Meanwhile they had evidently gotten over their fright, for pretty soon one walked out from the other side of the bluff, and came to a standstill, broadside toward me. He was too far off for me to see his horns.

As I was raising the rifle another stepped out and began to walk towards the first. I thought I might as well have as much of a target as possible to shoot at, and waited for the second buck to come out farther, which he did immediately and stood still just alongside of the first. I aimed above his shoulders and pulled the trigger. Over went the two bucks! And when I rushed down to where they lay I found I had pulled a little to one side, and the bullet had broken the backs of both.

While my companion was dressing them I went back and paced off the distance. It was just four hundred and thirty-one long paces; over four hundred yards. Both were large bucks and very fat, with the velvet hanging in shreds from their antlers, for it was late in August. The day was waning and we had a long ride back to the wagon, each with a buck behind his saddle. When we came back to the river valley it was pitch dark, and it was rather ticklish work for our heavily laden horses to pick their way down the steep bluffs and over the rapid stream; nor were we sorry when we saw ahead under a bluff the gleam of the camp fire, as it was reflected back from the canvas-topped prairie schooner.



His legs hardly so much as twitched, for, that for the time being represented home to us.

This was much the best shot I ever made; and it is just such a shot as any one will occasionally make if he takes a good many chances and fires often at ranges where the odds are greatly against his hitting. I suppose I had fired a dozen times at animals four or five hundred yards off, and now, by the doctrine of chances, I happened to hit; but I would have been very foolish if I had thought for a moment that I had learned how to hit at over four hundred yards. I have yet to see the hunter who can hit with any regularity at that distance, when he has to judge it for himself; though I have seen plenty who could make such a long range hit now and then. And I have noticed that such a hunter, in talking over his experience, was certain soon to forget the numerous misses he made, and to say,

and even to actually think, that his occasional hits represented his average shooting.

One of the finest black-tail bucks I ever shot was killed by lying out in a rather unusual place. I was hunting mountain-sheep, in a stretch of very high and broken country, and about mid-day, crept cautiously up to the edge of a great gorge, whose sheer walls went straight down several hundred feet. Peeping over the brink of the chasm I saw a buck, lying out on a ledge so narrow as to barely hold him, right on the face of the cliff wall opposite, some distance below, and about seventy yards diagonally across from me. He lay with his legs half stretched out, and his head turned so as to give me an exact center-shot at his forehead; the bullet going in between his eyes, so that his legs hardly so much as twitched when he received it.

It was toilsome and almost dangerous work climbing out to where he lay; I have never known any other individual, even of this bold and adventurous species of deer, to take its noonday siesta in a place so barren of all cover and so difficult of access even to the most sure-footed climber. This buck was as fat as a prize sheep, and heavier than any other I have ever killed; while his antlers also were, with two exceptions, the best I ever got.



From A to Z.

A young man who was on the verge of matrimony went to the jeweler and bought a ring and left instructions that in it be engraved the legend "From A to Z," which, being interpreted, meant from Anthony to Zenobia. To his astonishment, on calling for the ring the next day he found it engraved like an Egyptian obelisk and on closer examination found that the jeweler had put the whole alphabet, from A to Z, on it.

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GALICE CREEK ITEMS.

The Galice Creek Mining district is a busy section now-a-days and the general development of the camp is progressing very rapidly.

Development work on the Oriole mine, better known as the J. C. Madison property, is producing large quantities of high grade ore.

The government trail which is being built down the left bank of Rogue River from Galice creek, a distance of 12 miles to the falls is a much appreciated improvement. A bridge is now being built across the river and this, together with the trail opens up to travel a country which has hitherto been almost inaccessible.

The Alameda Mining Company is building a wagon bridge across Rogue River and are rushing the work as rapidly as possible in order to be able to haul their smelter material which will arrive in the near future. The "Seve-Thirty" mine at Galice has begun work on a 200-foot shaft.

The Gilman Bed Rock Mining Co. put their bed rock machine in the river for the first time on Thursday, the 17th at 6 p. m. and from all indications it is a successful enterprise. F. L. Gilman was in Grants Pass early in the week after the necessary machinery to enable actual operations to begin.

December 31, 1906, the members of the Grand Army of the Republic in good standing numbered 229,932. December 31, 1907, the members in good standing numbered 225,157, showing a net loss in membership during the year 1907 of 4775. During the year 1907 the loss by death was 10,242, being 5467 more than the entire net loss for the same period, conclusively demonstrating that during the year 1907 there was a substantial number added to the roll by muster-in and reinstatement.

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