

REALM OF HUNTSMEN.

BY A. J. KENDRICK.

That sportsmen who wants to find the best hunting in the Indian Territory, or in the Southwest, for that matter, will betake himself to the wild and woolly section of country located in the southeast corner of the Choctaw nation.

In truth it is exceedingly doubtful if any where in the United States he will find better sport involving the use of rod, dog and gun than that which awaits him in this portion of the territory, owned by the Choctaw Indians. There is hunting elsewhere in the Indian Territory, of course, but the cream of it is in this section mentioned. The rest of it, in comparison, is as skimmed milk.

It is a wild, rough, mountainous country, along which lie the rails of the Frisco System, but it is a country that is full of game and almost every kind of game at that. Here the man with the gun will find deer, bears, panthers, wild cats, cougars or mountain lions, coons, foxes, wild turkeys, pheasants, etc., to say nothing of the humble but nimble squirrels. In short if the hunter will penetrate far enough into these mountain fastnesses, he will find his paradise. But it will not be obtained without some hard work on his part.

Perhaps it is just as well to mention that point right here and now.

When in the early 30's the government began to move the Cherokees and Choctaws with their other red-skinned brethren to the Territory, the Indians found there such hunting grounds as he had never dreamed of in his Southern home, east of the Mississippi. In addition to the varieties mentioned, he beheld the buffalo roaming in great herds over the vast plains of the territory. The Indian is a good hunter when game is plenty and can be brought down without much exertion; and in those days the pleasures of the chase were attained by him without much exertion. Today one can still find old-time Indians in the Territory, who will tell you, as their dim eyes

glisten for a moment, of those good old days. But now it is very much different. Game is scarcer than in the early times. To the successful Nimrod a stout pair of legs is as essential as a good gun or a bountiful supply of ammunition. And so it happens that the Indian of the B. I. T. today amounts to little or nothing as a hunter, and his white brother enjoys a practical monopoly of the pleasures of the chase. Perhaps it is just as well that this is so, if you look at the matter from the standpoint of the Nimrod from the city, who boards a train with dog and gun, and sets forth to enjoy a season of sport in the paradise aforesaid. For if the Indian were as industrious in this line as he might be, he would leave mighty poor picking for his white brother.

Before writing in detail of the game country of the Indian Territory, it will be of interest to sportsmen to refer to the law governing hunting in the Indian Territory. There has been an idea in some quarters, that it is necessary to get a permit before killing game in the Indian country. This is not true, for the simple reason that Indian Agent Shoenfeldt will not issue permits. Col. Oscar L. Miles, the well known railroad attorney of Fort Smith, himself a sportsman of no little prowess—looked up the matter thoroughly not long ago, and in conversation with the writer he said:

"The Indian agent has made two constructions of the law regarding the matter of hunting in the Territory. His first construction was, that men who hunted for profit, that is, for the purpose of killing game and shipping it out of the Territory to be sold on the market, must be excluded, but that those persons who hunted for pleasure need not be molested. It was found, however, that his construction of the law did not serve to keep out the pot-hunters, who slaughtered game indiscriminately. So the Indian agent has made a second interpretation of the law, which prohibits hunting of any kind in the Territory.

However, it is generally understood that if a hunting party goes into the Territory and hunts purely for pleasure, killing only such game as it can reasonably use, its members will not be molested. I myself have been hunting in the Territory since the second ruling was made and so have many of my friends. None of us have been molested. Indian Agent Shoenfeldt is a broad-minded, liberal man, and his only object is to prevent the ruthless and reckless slaughter of game in the country under his jurisdiction. Personally, as a sportsman, I heartily endorse his action. I believe all true sportsmen will do the same. There has been in the past a frightful destruction of game in the Indian Territory. A year or so ago I was in Mena and noticed a big lot of deer-skins hanging up in a hide and fur store. The proprietor of the place told me they numbered 300, and that he had already that season shipped out 400 more of them, also some 1,500 coon and fox skins. That is simply one incident giving an idea of how the game in the Indian Territory is being decimated."

No thorough sportsman will hold a grudge against Indian Agent Shoenfeldt for his attitude in this matter, and no hunter who will act within the bounds of reason in killing Territory game need fear trouble. It may be mentioned in this connection, that one of the most ardent hunters who visits the Territory with his gun is a certain Federal Judge of the Southwestern District, who would be the last person on earth to break the laws.

The legal side of the question having thus been disposed of, the hunter may gather up his hunting traps, leash his dogs and board a Frisco train. That is, if he is wise, he will board one of the trains of that system, for there is something to hunt as well as something to see along the Frisco. Shortly after leaving Ft. Smith the Choctaw nation is reached and the mountainous country comes in sight. The game belt may be said to begin with Winding Stair Mountain and to extend to Hugo, I. T. In this zone, extending 30 or 40 miles on either

side of the Frisco, is to be found the finest hunting in the United States, because of the variety of game to be found there. Deer, bear, wild turkeys, pheasants, wild cats, panthers, mountain lions, foxes, coons, all these in addition to the smaller game, are here to be found. Not that this game is so plentiful as in earlier days. By no means. The Choctaw Nation has been the hunting ground of too many skillful Nimrods for that. But still there is plenty of sport to be enjoyed, even if it is coupled with considerable brain work and not a little leg work. The best deer hunting in this section is found along the creeks, of which may be mentioned Cloudy Creek, Wild Horse Creek, Frazier Creek, Nochnubbee, Eagle Fork, Boketukolo and others. This general section is extremely mountainous, and for rugged grandeur it is almost without an equal in the country. Among the principal mountains and mountain ranges, which afford unequalled hunting grounds, are the Keamichi, Winding Stair, Eagle Fork, Blue Bouncer, Black Fork and Rich Mountain. While many hunting parties go into this country in wagon, if one wishes to get to the points where game is the most plentiful, he will provide himself with pack ponies. He can thus reach places inaccessible to a wagon outfit.

Arriving at Tuskahoma, or going further down to Antlers, the hunter can rest over night and then start for the mountain fastnesses. If he is wise he will take along some good hunter or guide, who is familiar with the stamping ground of the deer or other game. With such a companion, skilled in the arts of woodcraft, success is much more certain.

Speaking of deer, one of the methods of hunting that animal employed by old-time woodsmen in this section, is that of fire-hunting, a plan familiar to most lovers of the chase.

"Fire-hunting is my stronghold when it comes to killing deer," said one native, who has been hunting in the Kiamichi country for 20 years, to the writer, the other day, "Gimme a good strong light, a dark night

and my winchester and I can bring 'em down every time."

The old-fashioned method of fire-hunting was to have one man carry in a pan fastened to a stick thrown over his shoulder some blazing pine knots. These would be renewed from time to time, and the bright light would reveal the presence of the deer by showing his eyes, first as a single ball of fire, and then, as the hunter drew nearer, two balls of fire. "Never shoot until the single ball of fire becomes two balls," is the rule of the hunter who stalks the deer at night. The bright light seems to fascinate or hypnotize the animal and he falls an easy prey to the hunter's bullet. The same method is successfully employed in hunting the coon.

Then there is the black bear, a cowardly cuss, and very little of a fighter unless he gets into a corner and is compelled to give battle. But then, even a cow will fight under those circumstances. To use the expression of an old hunter who has for years been bringing down all sorts of game in the Choctaw Nation, the Territory black bear is "God Almighty's race horse," when he gets to running away from an enemy. He will jump from crag to crag, and from boulder to boulder, as though he had wings. It is not the easiest thing in the world to kill a bear, for his vulnerable spots are not numerous. If you get a chance to shoot him squarely in the head, the chances are that you will not bring him down, for he has an acute angled frontispiece from which the bullets have a distressing knack of gliding harmlessly, and, moreover, his skull is like adamant. The old-time hunter will tell you that the best way to bring down a bear is to shoot him in the brown spot back of the ear, which will send the bullet into his brain, or to shoot him in the lights back of the shoulder. All of which, of course, requires no small degree of skill, for if Mr. Bear is not punctured in the proper place, he will amble away and give you the horse-laugh, or rather the bear-laugh.

The turkey hunter finds his hands full when he gets into this section. The turkey

here attains an enormous size, and 25 and 30-pounders are by no means uncommon. During the "gobbling" season, in the month of April, is of course the best time to hunt this species of game, for then both the gobbler and the hen may be the more easily summoned by the deceptive call of the hunter. Still, at other seasons of the year wild turkeys are plentiful enough to afford the best sort of sport. And it is enough to make the mouth of an epicure water to hear old campers talk of killing 25-pound turkeys so big and full of meat, that steaks were sliced off them and broiled just as one would broil a porterhouse. You never get the full benefit of wild turkey flesh until you have it served up in this fashion by a good old ducky camp chef who properly understands his business.

Quails and prairie chickens, it is hardly necessary to say, are found in great quantities in the Indian Territory, more particularly, of course, in the level country. In truth, in the scope of this brief article it is impossible to dwell in detail upon the various forms of game-shooting that here await the hunter. Let him seek that game in the right places and at the right time and his efforts will be amply rewarded. Furthermore, he will find in this section ideal camping grounds, for mountain streams, carrying an abundance of pure, fresh water are here in plenty.

In concluding this article, it may be mentioned that it has been proposed by those interested in the subject that the government fence off a game preserve, say 40 miles square, in the section of the Choctaw Nation referred to. Such a reservation, cornering about eight miles from Tuskahoma, would include every variety of game to be found in the Territory. If such a tract were enclosed and retained under government control—having first been secured by purchase from the Choctaw Indians—hunters would be excluded from that section, just as they are excluded from Yellowstone Park. But such a plan carried out would be of inestimable benefit in preserving the game which exists in such variety in this

section of the Southwest—something which would be hailed with great satisfaction by every sportsman. It is not at all improbable that this matter will be brought to the attention of Congress at its next session, and those who favor such a plan believe that President Roosevelt, great lover of the

pleasures of the chase as he is, may be relied upon to do everything in his power to put the project into execution. "Protect American game" ought to be as much of a national slogan as "Protect American forests." Perhaps, in the near future, it will be.

TO HELEN.

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE.

Helen, thy beauty is to me
 Like those Niccan barks of yore,
 That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
 The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
 To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
 Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
 Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
 To the glory that was Greece
 And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in you brilliant window-niche
 How statue-like I see thee stand,
 The agate lamp within thy hand!
 Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
 Are Holy Land!

CUT IT OUT.

If you have an inclination
 To be savage, cross and mean,
 Careless in your conversation,
 Full of bitterness and spleen,
 Put aside this wicked habit;
 Charge upon it with a shout!
 Seize it—grab it! Stick it—stab it!
 Cut it out!

If you see some clever verses
 Such as poets often write,
 Where the bard his soul immerses
 In a flood of golden light,
 Take the poem—take and save it;
 It will help you, past a doubt;
 You in after years may crave it,
 Cut it out!

—Willis Clanahan.

WELEETKA, INDIAN TERRITORY.

BY THOS. F. MILLARD.

I am prompted to write the history of Weleetka because it illustrates as well, if not better, than any other I have encountered, the wonderful development which is with almost inconceivable rapidity converting the Indian Territory into a center of modern civilization. Readers of the Frisco System Magazine are fully aware that such development is going on. Things are happening in this country. Important events in a steady progress so press upon one another that they seem to lose importance, and become commonplace. In this atmosphere it requires a striking performance to command attention. The story of Weleetka is one of such. Even in a country where people habitually "do things," it stands out as a type of aggressive strenuosity.

The story of Weleetka is not a long one—indeed, its history dates but a few months back—but there is plenty to tell about it. Early in the present year—1902—it occurred to two young men that the new and almost unscratched region that had been made accessible by the Red River division of the Frisco system could support another town besides those that had already sprung up along the route. Having the idea, they proceeded to act upon it, and began to look for a location. After a few weeks spent in looking over the country, they selected a point on the north fork of the Canadian river. There the river makes a great loop to the southward, and after zig-zaging around for a long distance, returns to within a short distance of where the loop began. It is over 30 miles around the "boot," as the loop is locally termed, and it is but little over two miles across the neck. The railroad enters the neck at its top, and crosses the river at the southern extremity of the "boot."

Another element of advantage suggested this location. The survey of a new railroad the Fort Smith & Western, had been commenced. This road, it was understood, was

to be built between Fort Smith, Ark., and Guthrie, Okla. While the exact course of the road was not, of course, known even to the engineers commissioned to select it, it was generally surmised that it would pass through Muskogee and thence westward across the Creek Nation to the Oklahoma line. It required no unusual foresight to realize that a town of some importance would be likely to spring up at the point where the new road crossed the Frisco, and speculation was rife as to where this crossing would be made. Efforts were naturally made to bring the crossing to one of the towns already established on the Frisco System, notably Okmulgee, which seemed to lie almost in a direct route between Muskogee and Guthrie. Okmulgee is the capital of the Creek Nation, is a thriving town and her enterprising citizens realized the desirability of additional railroad facilities.

Such was the situation when Lake Moore and J. F. Clark, the men who had a scheme for the establishment of a new town in mind, set to work. Whether they got a "straight tip" or not is a matter of speculation, but the consensus of opinion is that they simply exercised their own intelligence. At any rate, after a careful examination of the surrounding country, they decided to their own satisfaction that the Fort Smith & Western would be practically compelled, by the nature of the territory, to cross the Frisco System just where it enters the "boot" of the Canadian River. Here, then, they decided to found their town. But their difficulties had only commenced. All attempts to secure permission of the government to create a townsite at that point failed completely. Not in the least daunted, they managed to secure anticipatory leases on a tract of land sufficiently extensive for their purpose. Of course, they had to take a chance on the validity of the word of honor of the Indians to whom the land had been