

SHOOTING

A SHOOTER'S NOTEBOOK.

Grouse and Telephone Wires.

MAN Y GROUSE are killed every year by flying against telegraph and telephone wires. This is not, like so many other things to-day, the fault solely of the Postmaster-General. It is one of the difficulties which follow on bringing the advantages of modern telegraph and telephone systems to the mountains of Scotland, where birds have been used to fly where they choose without looking carefully ahead of them. None the less, it is a form of casualty to be avoided, if possible, by owners of grouse estates; and, as a matter of fact, they do try to avoid it by making the telegraph wires as invisible as they possibly can be. The obvious thing to do, when you have a long strand of wire which a bird cannot see, is to hang something solid on it which the bird can see. And so, when telegraph wires were first brought across moorland, such grousing as was done by flying birds, people began to make them more easily seen by the simple process of tying here and there a bunch of heather—just as in many places they tie heather to the fence wires which run along the top of stone walls. Later a better and more lasting method was adopted, and small pieces of wire, which instead of a succession of almost invisible lines became a pattern of spots and patches, which could be seen and avoided by flying birds. Such plates must be familiar to most sportsmen, but they are not known to grouse shooters, and probably have been the subject of many questions by persons looking out of the carriage window at the lines of telegraph wires along the railway. Those who asked and answered such questions were probably unaware of the amount of hard work that they were shortly to add to the work of a Government Department.

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"With reference to your letter of Dec. 10 last, on the subject of providing guards for telegraph wires, I have the satisfaction of stating that the Department is willing to provide and erect the standard type of cork game guard, provided you give an undertaking to pay the cost, estimated at £23. Five guards per span would be fitted on fifty-seven spans of wire. You will no doubt be glad to hear that you have the option of your wish the work proceeded with."

The owner of the moor (I will call him X.), wrote, in answer to this, to point out that a fifty-guards on a fifty-seven spans of wire cost £23, the cost of each guard (including the material) would come to £11.75 or 1s. 7d. each, which he considered too much—indeed, prohibitive—and he invited the Department to reconsider their estimate. In due course he received from the Post Office Engineering Department, Glasgow, the following reply:

Sir,—With reference to your letter of 5th instant, it is regretted that the type of cork game guard which cannot be reduced. The type of cork game guard which was proposed to erect is of the standard pattern, and is much cheaper than any other which is in use by the Department.

The guards would be erected on the main Castles Douglas Estate, on the one side of the main road, and on the wires between Lochbank and Bridge of Dea and 5 guards per span between Bridge of Dea and Rhonehouse, a total of 286 guards.

It will be understood that with respect to the wires on the Railway, the provision of the necessary protection will be a matter for you to negotiate with the Company concerned. I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
G.S.D. R. WARING,
Superintending Engineer.

This reply giving little hope of a reduction of cost, X. wrote to the Field to ask what had been the experience of other persons in erecting game guards. His letter happened to coincide with another inquiry of a similar kind, and in consequence, on Feb. 21, a letter was sent from the Field editorial department to the Postmaster-General inquiring for information on the rules of the Post Office in regard to the protection of telegraph wires, the cost of erecting guards, the possibility of the guards hindering the proper use of the telephone wire, and so on. This was acknowledged by the Secretary to the Post Office, and the next day the letter which should receive attention," followed his signature with the formula.

No. 34. (Rev'd. 81627/17).
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And in due course the letter, having received attention, was answered as follows:
General Post Office,
17th March, 1922.

GAME GUARDS FOR TELEGRAPH WIRES.
SIR,—In reply to your letter of the 21st ult., I am directed by the Postmaster-General to state that only one type of game guard is now fitted by the Post Office. It consists of a fixed cork guard, which is attached to the telegraph wire line wire; this type of guard is not detrimental to the working of the wires.

The guards are fixed by Post Office workmen at the cost of the applicants. The cost varies considerably, being largely dependent on the locality of the point at which the guards are required, but it is always possible to state the estimated cost of any requirements. I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
For the secretary,

Now, what is a prospective erector of game guards to learn from the foregoing correspondence? He knows that every year hundreds of grouse and partridges are killed by telephone and telegraph wires, and he naturally wishes to prevent such things from happening on his own property if he can. But he can do so only by complying with the Post Office rules, and by paying the bill. And see what this amounts to. The cost of erecting the official cylindrical cork guard, he is told, "varies considerably, being largely dependent on the accessibility of the point at which the guards are required." On the question of the cost of the material, he is told, in the case of X.'s moor, "X. has been good enough to send me a description of the locality in which his moor is situated, as regards accessibility. He writes—

"The wires on my estate, on which I asked the Post-office to fix the guards, run along a main road for something under two miles. The accessibility of the point at which the guards are run from a point about half a mile outside the town of Castle Douglas for a distance of, say, one and three-quarters to two miles. There is a branch line at the other end which goes across country to a village for a distance of three-quarters of a mile. On the main road there are, I think,

speaking from memory, some five lines of wire, and two only on each inch.

So that we are faced with the fact that if it costs 1s. 7d. to erect a game guard on this obviously accessible line of wire, the cost of hanging guards on a line in, say, the depths of Sutherland would be considerably greater. Shall we say that it would amount to 2s. per game guard? And shall we then refer to the post office's letter of Feb. 13? We learn from this that the cylindrical cork pattern "is much cheaper than any other which is in use by the department." So that to erect any other pattern in, say, Sutherland, would cost even more. Would it, because more difficult to erect, cost more?

Shall we, finally, look into the price of cork? I do not know what the size of the cylindrical cork game guard may be, but I see in the current price list of the Army and Navy Stores that you can get a cork bath mat, 28in. by 20in. and 3/4in. thick, for 10s. That is an area of 560sq. in. and if you cut it up into pieces measuring, say, 5in. by 3 1/4in. you would get thirty-two guards, costing 3/4d. each. Suppose, further, that it cost 1/4d. to attach some sort of wire clips or fastening, the price of the cork would be 1/2d. per guard. If you took five minutes to fasten on each guard (I do not suppose it would, but I am calculating with outside figures throughout), the fixing would occupy a little under twenty minutes—say three days of eight hours each. If the fixer were paid 1/2d. per hour, the cost of the cork and the fastenings would cost 28s. 5d. + £5 18s. 9d., the whole cost would be £3 18s. 9d. The Post Office estimate is £23.

I do not say that £3 18s. 9d. would be cheap for a job of fastening game guards to two miles of wire. I think that it would be dear, and that a firm able to buy cork wholesale, if cork is the best material—could offer a suitable guard at less than 6d. each. But is 7d. 1/2? Suppose the job were put out to tender, is it conceivable that any private firm would make such a price? In fact, however, the Post Office, as a public body, is of our present day evils—monopoly and officialdom! The Post Office insists on its price because no one else is allowed to compete with it. And the price is what it is because the Post Office, with time on his hands and a monopoly of the business, decides that something shall design a material, and that it shall be made, cork, cylindrical, and shall write minutes about it and pay somebody else to file the minutes, so that he and all the other officials shall be able to look at the minute, the files, and the cork, and get a cork cylindrical, and write a minute about them on paper with letters and figures at the bottom thus:

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Quite seriously, does not that double line of letters and figures at the bottom of an official postcard acknowledging an ordinary letter from a member of the public sum up the whole matter?

A MORNING AFTER LIONS.

TWO BLACK-MANED LIONS in a morning must be accounted uncommon good. A lion at all in the daytime is a matter of luck, so we could not complain of any taxes on the part of the Post Office, or of the Post Office on this occasion. Some months back I was out on safari in the Masai Country, in Kenya Colony. Lions were scarce, which was more than the heat was, and we were cursed with a particularly hot day. We had a party of 10, and I tried to keep together always as if the miles got 50 yards apart they would let off the most hideous series of that particular noise which may be described as a cross between a neigh and a bray. In six weeks we had only got a full-sized lioness, a smaller one and two topies. One of the topies, however, they were all shot in the daytime and not from a "machan" at night over a kill. We happened to be hunting some huge plains called the Fota that morning, and had been wandering dissociately about when we spied an old Masai running a lance towards us waving his spear wildly about. When he got enough wind to speak and wit to be articulate, he described what was apparently a "herd" of lions "over there" waving his spear over the horizon in general. He had numbered them and planned and sure enough we saw lions. Two fine black-maned lions, three lionesses, and an assortment of six cubs of various ages from the size of a big foxterrier upwards. The whole party were trotting along in single file, the lions some half mile in the lead. We were all on horseback, and the lionesses were in the lead, and our mules had been driven as a pair, and had it firmly fixed in their idiotic heads that ridden or not they must always go as if in harness. Despite our efforts they gradually overtook us, and the lionesses were in the lead, and the lionesses. I know no member of the S.P.C.K. who could have liked the work I put in with the butt end of my rifle. Abreast of the leading lioness H. and I could not have been more than 200 yards apart. I do not know about H., but I know I did not know I was in a trap. If I should I get off and try and stop her, or should I try and gallop away, or should I dismount and flee? However, a diversion occurred in a troop of zebra circling in full gallop round the lionesses and families. When their object was I do not know, but it had the effect of withdrawing unwelcome attention from us. H. now joined me, and we set off at our best pace after the gentlemen of the party. I, being lighter and better mounted, was soon up to within 400 yards of the lionesses, and was then in a position to get a good shot. I dismounted, and sitting down let drive with a .303, hitting him plumb between the eyes. H. then raked him through the shoulder with a .450. Leaving him for a moment, I turned to the lionesses, and fired a shot into the side of the lioness. The same thing happened as in lion No. 1, except that he charged the moment I dismounted. I managed to turn him with a bullet in the back, and H. broke his shoulder. Another shot into the side of the lioness, now approached within five yards of him. He was magnificent in sight with his black mane sticking up on end round his head, and his big amber eyes flashing with rage. I finished him, and then our scattered entourage of saives, gunbearer, porters, and camp followers, all of whom were now on their feet and alive. While H. was superintending the skinning of No. 2, I rode back with half the men to No. 1. I found him very much alive, although crippled and very annoyed. A bullet at close range through the brain settled him, and on skinning him I found that he had been shot in the head. I took his eyes, had them travelled under the skin, and came out at the back of the skull. The skull itself had not a mark on it. The moral, as far as I am concerned, is never to try a frontal shot at about 50 yards, and then to stop. Let it be known that the time was shortly coming, indeed, now is, when Leo is no longer the "king of beasts" in East Africa, but is now classed as "vermin," and may be poisoned if the would-be slayer is unable to obtain him in any other way.

THE PRINCE OF WALES IN INDIA.

WE are able this week to give some interesting details of the shooting which his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales enjoyed on his visit to the guest of his Highness the Maharaja of Bikanir. Shooting parties of various sizes and parties on three days, Dec. 3, 5 and 6, the guns being posted, in the case of the crane and duck shoots, round the different lakes or tanks, and the birds lighting from one to the other. On Dec. 3, in the morning the shoot was at Kodamesar, and his Royal Highness was accompanied by fourteen other guns, including the Maharaja Kumar, the Earl of Cromer, Capt. the Hon. Piers Leigh, Sir Godfrey Thomas, and Lord Louis Mountbatten, bagged 30 demoiseille crane, 6 ducks, 335 Imperial sand grouse, 10 cranes, 10 ducks, and 10 guinea fow. At the Gunner Lake the Prince, with H.H. the Maharajah of Bikanir, the Earl of Cromer, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Sir Lionel Halsey, Lt.-Col. Horley, and Mr de Mowbray, killed 10 cranes, 10 guinea fow, and 5 other ducks. At Chandasagar had 44 ducks, the Maharaja Kumar, with Capt. the Hon. Piers Leigh, Capt. Dudley North, Capt. the Hon. Bruce Ogilvy, Sir Godfrey Thomas, and the other 10, bagged 62 ducks; Maharaj Sir Bijay Singhji at Gohri killed 8; at Durbar, H.H. the Maharajah Jam Sahib of Navanagar, H.H. the Nawab Sahib of Palanpur, Sir Philip Grey Egerton, and Sir Harry Watson had 5 cranes, 2 sand grouse, and 15 ducks; and Capt. Walker, Capt. Dudley North, and Capt. de Mowbray, bagged 4 cranes, 7 sand grouse, and 27 ducks; at Kodamesar, 10 cranes, 39 demoiseille crane, 305 ducks, and 9 sand grouse.

On Dec. 5, in the morning, his Royal Highness, with H.H. the Maharajah, the Earl of Cromer, and Sir Lionel Halsey, at the Gunner Lake, bagged 335 Imperial sand grouse, 10 ducks, his Royal Highness accounting for 65 and the Maharajah for 138. At Sugansagar there were 25 guns out, including H.H. the Maharajah Jam Sahib of Navanagar, H.H. the Nawab Sahib of Palanpur, the Maharaja Kumar, Maharaj Sir Bijay Singhji, Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Hon. Piers Leigh, Capt. the Hon. Bruce Ogilvy, Sir Philip Grey Egerton, Sir Harry Watson, Sir Godfrey Thomas, Col. Worgan, Lt.-Col. O'Keefe, Lt.-Col. Harvey, Capt. Dudley North, Capt. de Mowbray, Capt. Walker, Capt. Boileau, Capt. Foynder, Surg.-Commander Newport, Mr de Montmorency, Mr Petrie, Mr Ashdown, Mr Holland, and Mr Metcalfe, killed 695 Imperial sand grouse, 3 ducks, and 1 guinea fow, a total for Gunner of 1,430 grouse and 3 ducks. Two small parties, one consisting of 5 guns, bagged between them 20 Imperial and 7 sand grouse and 2 ducks; and at Kodamesar, 15 of the guns who shot at Sugansagar killed 317 sand grouse and 1 Imperial sand grouse, 29 sand grouse, 2 cranes, 2 guinea fow, 10 Imperial sand grouse, 324 sand grouse, and 5 ducks—in all, 1390 head.

On the morning of Dec. 6 the shoot was again at Sugansagar. At Sugansagar his Royal Highness was one of a party of 25 guns, including the Maharajah, the Maharaj of Bikanir, H.H. the Nawab Sahib of Palanpur, Maharaj Sir Bijay Singhji, Kumar Sir Bawani Singhji, the Earl of Cromer, and Lord Louis Mountbatten, who bagged 54 cranes, 10 ducks, 335 Imperial sand grouse, and 1 duck, while 54 cranes, 10 ducks, 335 Imperial sand grouse, and 1 duck, were bagged by the Maharaja Kumar, H.H. the Maharajah Jam Sahib of Navanagar, the Hon. Piers Leigh, and Sir Philip Grey Egerton, killing 339 Imperial sand grouse, 26 sand grouse, and 1 duck, making a total for the morning of 886 Imperial sand grouse, 29 sand grouse, 2 cranes, 2 guinea fow, and 1390 head.

On Dec. 6 the Prince killed 2 blackbuck and a chinkara, and Lord Louis Mountbatten killed 4 chinkara and a bustard. Sir Lionel Halsey the previous day had shot a blackbuck and a chinkara, and these, added to the other bags, made a total of 2 blackbuck and 4 chinkara, 1 bustard, 39 demoiseille crane, 312 duck, 1946 Imperial sand grouse, and 362 sand grouse; total, 2669 head.

Those who are unfamiliar with Indian shooting may be interested to know that the demoiseille crane, *koony* or *koona*, is a species of crane, very comparable to that obtained with the grey-lag geese. The birds fly high and fast, and are very wary and cunning. They have often been mistaken, even by experienced guns, for geese, as they fly in skeins. Not only are they difficult to shoot, but they are excellent eating.

A DAY'S PARTRIDGE SHOOTING, AND SOME DOGS.

A SHORT TIME AGO, when away from home, I was asked as a stranger to a day's partridge shooting, and naturally accepted gladly. On arrival at the meeting place, I was asked to go to the house with my gun, and to meet the keeper with his dog. I am fond of dogs and seeing them work, so my day's enjoyment was made certain. My host had a flatcoat bitch with a wise-looking expression and nice head; on the show bench she would be classed amongst the best of her kind. I had a dog of the same breed, a Labrador, reputed to contain the blood of the Munder, Peter of Faskally, Flapper, and other breeds; another gun had a retriever of flatcoat and Labrador breed; the third was a yellow-red Labrador, and the other a Labrador, reputed to be a cross between a flatcoat and a Labrador. I must be a little uncertain. Last but not least there was the keeper's dog. The exact breeding of this defeated me. I asked him during the day, and he replied, "It's well bred on one side, but just a dog." In looks it was a thick-set dog, coal-colored and a fine eye, and a fine set of ears, and a strong piece of cart rope fastened to an enormously broad leather collar, which had clearly not been taken off for many months, if ever.

We were walking partridges and covert was none too good. The wind was wild, and the ground was very rough in some rough ground towards the best rook field, and a hare, as has often before happened, caused trouble. The yellow-red dog broke in, but chased only a short distance, when the inter-bred took a hand in the game, and by snatching the bird from the inter-bred's jaws, she was the victor for the roots. The owner of the dog called out "shoot," but as the hare was fully 50 yards off and the dog rather close up, I was uncertain whether his remark was intended to refer to the hare or the dog. However, both went into the air, and the inter-bred was the victor. The keeper, who was next me and appeared to be saying a lot to himself. After a period the dog returned, and we advanced. My host, on the left, got a right and left, and then winged a bird with long shot. His old bitch was to like that from the inter-bred, and it being a long run, 10 yards, and back to her master and into his hand. She next saw a hare wounded by the gun on her right, and away she went at an easy pace; my host did not wait, but on we went. The keeper remarked that she was more than human in her knowledge of the hare, and she was a fine dog, when no man could stop her, and this she did all day. She came back with the hare. The highly-bred Labrador was clearly on his toes, and his owner must have missed a lot of partridge by his eye on this dog. He expected to see a confirmed squarer, but he happened never to take his eye off the dog when shooting; the dog was very fast, and had a good nose, too, but was ever on the *qui vive*. His owner will ace prematurely.

At the end of the day my host called out a cat had left the roots and gone into a thick double fence of bramble and blackthorn, and added it was black and white. The keeper remarked "That's her," and made off hastily to where last seen. He lost his dog and he picked up the line of the dog, ignoring the fact that the dog was in the dog. We all watched and waited. The way that dog went through