

Loza, Chief Dispatcher at the Zocalo, all handed in their resignations upon the institution of the new management.

In the City of Puebla active preparations are in hand for electrifying the whole of the tramway system, under the auspices of the Mexican Light and Power Co., who have the monopoly here, as they have in Mexico City. No doubt, in course of time electric traction will be introduced into other States, such as Guadalajara, Oaxaca, etc., which are at present served only by mule-drawn vehicles. This latter class of traction is prevalent in nearly every town of importance throughout the Republic, some lines being from three to four miles in length, at which distance from the cities several railway stations are situated, notably in the case of Leon and Cordoba.

As a general rule, the tramcars, although of a cheap and unpretentious character, are found to be clean, comparing favourably with those of a similar and even "superior" class in the Argentine and Brazil. In both these latter Republics many of the cars are so filthy that any passenger having regard for his personal comfort and safety would hesitate to ride in them. In no case in Mexico have I seen anything to complain of in the way of lack of cleanliness. The mule-flesh, also, is of a higher quality than that in either of the Republics I have referred to. Without any compulsion from the police, the owners of the tram-mules keep them in thoroughly good order, the animals presenting the appearance of being well-fed and cared for.

In the City of Guanajuato, the Tramway Co. has hitherto driven a flourishing trade, since every passenger has from necessity to make the journey from the railway terminus at Marfil by this means to the City of Guanajuato, the tram-fare being 25 cents. (6d.) for a distance of four miles.

Owing to the influence of powerful vested interests in the City of Guanajuato, very severe opposition to the advent to the railway has up till lately succeeded in keeping the scheme in subjection. The spirit of progress, however, has now proved too strong, and the Guanajuato tramways' monopoly has none too soon been broken down by the advent of the new branch of the Central Railway, which is now carrying its line from Marfil right into the heart of the city.

CHAPTER XXVII

Sport in Mexico—Wild-fowl shooting—Varieties of small game—Wholesale destruction of ducks—Favourable localities—Tarpon fishing—Mexican and Florida waters compared—Notable catches—Big-game—Bear—Deer—Peccary—Wild-cat—Jaguar—Mountain lion—A good day's sport—Cock-fighting—Value of birds—Methods of training.

THE time will undoubtedly come when sportsmen from all parts of the world will regard an annual visit to Mexico of as much importance as bear-hunting in the Rockies, wild-game shooting in Africa, or tiger-shooting in India. Game is found practically all over Mexico, but naturally local conditions are such that certain districts offer far greater attractions to hunters than others. In considering the sport of the country, it may be advisable to divide it into three sections—namely, fowl, fish, and big-game. In regard to the former, I know of no place in the Americas where such an immense number of wild-fowl congregate: pelican, swan, goose, brant and duck of every variety, snipe, curlew, and sandhill crane are found by the millions. In one district, namely, that of Lake Chapala in the State of Jalisco, hundreds of thousands of duck are shot every year, and sport is here so cheap and so easy that it is a marvel to me that it is not more largely indulged in than it is. I feel certain that if the average American or Englishman knew of the magnificent sport awaiting his gun in Mexico, little could keep him from participating in it. Neither does it vary much from year to year, the breeding of the fowl being so regular that fine sport may always be depended upon.

A very favourite way of hunting ducks and geese is by stalking them from a canoe. The rushes make it easy to approach the feeding birds, while their tameness and their abundance permit of a very large number of flocks being stalked in the course of a day. About twenty miles south of

San Bartolo, in the State of San Luis Potosi, there are some swamps formed by water from large springs, and here during the winter season countless numbers of aquatic birds congregate. No license or permit is necessary to shoot them, but so little interest is evinced in this sport that the birds are permitted to multiply indefinitely, and amount in number almost to a nuisance. Somewhat further eastward, in the foot-hills between the mountains and the Gulf of Mexico, may be found a veritable sportsman's paradise, for here every kind of game is to be met with, especially pheasants, of which there are five varieties, varying in size from a pigeon to a turkey. There is no close season in Mexico, and shooting can be carried on at any time and in all seasons of the year, while sportsmen are allowed to bring their guns and a limited amount of ammunition free of duties at the border.

Of quail there are some six or seven varieties all belonging to the partridge family. The bob-white or American quail is found on the river bottoms and prairies of the Rio Grande, where both the feed and the cover suit it. This bird prefers the neighbourhood of human habitations. The blue Mexican quail is somewhat shy, and is more at home in the sage-bush thickets of the sheep and goat ranges, where he displays an astuteness and shyness in keeping out of range of the shotgun that baffle many a shooter.

Massena partridge, an extremely beautiful and somewhat rare bird, is also to be found in the foot-hills of the mountain ranges that border the Rio Grande Valley, and usually in the most solitary and desolate localities, where man but seldom ventures. In the neighbourhood of Durango another variety of partridge, much resembling the bob-white, is occasionally met with, its habitat being on the rocky pine mountains, where the blue quail is never seen, and usually found in small coveys. On the peninsula of La Baja California, the handsome valley quail of California abounds, while in the State of Guanajuato a hybrid bird somewhat between a blue quail and a bob-white is met with.

The prairie hen is sometimes seen on the dry plains of Coahuila, but it is more a U.S.A. bird than a Mexican. In the tropical foot-hill country of the Pacific coast a large and beautiful variety of the quail or partridge is found, being

locally known as "perdix." It differs notably in size and appearance from other birds of its family, but somewhat resembles the English partridge, except that it is larger. Its body is plump and round, with the very smallest possible vestige of a tail, the plumage being of slate-blue except on the breast, which is a reddish-brown, while the head and back resemble those of the wild pigeon. The "perdix" is a strictly solitary bird, haunting the shady banks of the hot country water courses, and when frightened, rises with the whirr of the ruffled grouse, again dropping to the earth like a stone after a very short flight. The Mexican jack-snipe is very much like his English cousin or Wilson snipe, arriving in September or October, and haunting the marshy places all round the country, especially the lakes in the Valley of Mexico, until March or April, when it takes flight for the Northern breeding-places.

Upon the shores of Lake Xochimilco, where the President of Mexico has a game preserve, to which foreign sportsmen are occasionally invited, some of the finest snipe-shooting in the world can be enjoyed, bags having been made there which would seem exaggerated were they described. Doves and wild pigeons, as well as golden plovers, known in Mexico as "ganga," are also to be found here in abundance during the season, and offering the finest possible sport. In the Sierra Madre, a species of wild pigeon, much resembling the almost extinct passenger pigeon of the north, is frequently seen by the large game-hunter in flocks of from twenty to sixty, while along the coast a pigeon approaching the size and resembling in shape, colour, and square cut, the common domestic blue pigeon, haunts the swamp country in small flocks; it is locally known as "patagon." It is a shy and wary bird, and offers excellent sport to the patient hunter. The common white-winged or sharp-tailed dove which abounds in hundreds of thousands all over the Republic, is a slow flyer and is easily "potted," but the sharp-tailed dove is a swift flyer, and calls for a greater display of ability upon the part of a shot. Among other birds met with in Mexico are several varieties of the duck family; wild swans, which come from the Arctic circle and return thither at regular intervals; the Canada-goose, of both the gray and the white variety; wild geese in

countless numbers, which are very easily shot owing to their great weight and lazy habits, and a large variety of cranes, storks, herons, and other aquatic birds. Of ducks it is difficult to say how many varieties exist, and the reckless slaughter of these birds which proceeds on the part of the natives would shock a true sportsman in the Old Country. They are not only blown up by dynamite, but regular holocausts take place by trap-guns being set, hundreds of birds which are never even collected being slaughtered at one time. It is on record that on Lake Xochimilco more than 1,500 ducks were killed by a single discharge of one of these batteries.

The varieties of duck include the canvas-back, mallard, red-head, sprig-tail, widgeon, bald-pates, and both blue and green-winged teal; while cinnamon teal, an exceedingly handsome bird, is very commonly come across. The wild muscovy duck, and another locally known as "pichechin," are found in lagoons of the hot country. The green or wood ibis, and the white or Egyptian ibis, also abound. In the green, shady *quebradas*, where the water is very cold, the pheasants have their haunts, and here may be seen the "faisan real" or royal pheasant, the common pheasant, which is a much smaller bird, weighing only from 4 to 5 lbs., and the "chachalaca" or "cuiche." Parrots and other gaudy plumaged birds exist in thousands, while turkey gobblers are found from the Sierra to the sea; weather, feed, water, cover, and other conditions are favourable to their existence. The common bronze wild turkey of Texas comes over to the Northern States of the Republic at certain times of the year, while in the western Sierra Madre a lighter coloured, but equally large, turkey is commonly found, being known locally as the white-rumped wild turkey. Large flocks of these birds are seen in the State of Durango, as many as sixty being counted in one drove. In Southern Mexico is found the ocellated or Honduras turkey, and some other smaller and lesser known varieties.

By means of much advertising and distribution of attractive literature Florida has become known as the best tarpon fishing-ground in the world. As a matter of fact, however, infinitely better sport is to be obtained upon the coasts of

Mexico than on those of Florida, and experienced fishers who have tried both pronounce unmistakeably in favour of the former. The fishing season is from November 1st to April 1st, a time when the tarpon cannot be found on the Texas coast. The first tarpon taken by rod at Tampico, of which there is any record, were captured in 1899 by two Englishmen, whose names are unknown. They came there by sailing-vessels which touched at the port, and were introduced to the "gentle art" by Dr. H. W. Howe of Mexico City, a well-known and enthusiastic sportsman. It was Dr. Howe who caught what was then regarded as the largest tarpon ever seen. It weighed 223 lbs., and was 6 feet 8 inches in length. Since then, however, the same sportsman captured a fish 6 feet 10 inches long, while the British Vice-Consul at Tampico, Mr. Wilson, landed last season a magnificent specimen 7 feet 2½ inches, and of this fish a photograph will be found elsewhere.

Dr. Howe and others agree that the best tarpon fishing in the world is to be found in the Penuco river, at Tampico. The tarpon is the gamest fish that ever took a hook, and in proportion to its size is as sporty as a 5 lb. black bass. Many descriptions have been written by enthusiastic fishers of the sport which the tarpon affords, who dwell eloquently upon the "rise," "breaking water," the "lead" and "gaffed." Columns of highly descriptive matter have been published describing the struggles of the fish, which last from an hour to three hours—much to the satisfaction, if to the fatigue, of the sportsman.

Mr. J. A. L. Waddell, a well-known engineer of Kansas City, Missouri, who has fished on the Florida and Texas coasts, has stated that when he first went to Tampico in December 1899 he spent eleven days there fishing, and during that time he landed 24 tarpon, 59 jack-fish, and 2 jew-fish, weighing all told, approximately, 3,500 lbs., his largest tarpon measuring 6 feet 3 inches. He went there again in March 1900, and in one day landed 6 tarpon averaging 5 feet 8½ inches in length, in addition to a large number of other big fish. Upon subsequent dates he made records equally as good, the last day, in four hours, catching 35 jack-fish averaging 20 lbs. each in weight.

An expert fisherman has said that the art of tarpon fishing

consists in keeping a steady strain on the line until the tragedy is over, or until the fish escapes, but by giving him a moment's breathing spell he is rendered fresh and ready for another battle. If it were not for the splendid sport which is afforded, tarpon fishing would really be hard work—aptly put, it is said that there is more fight to the pound and more pounds to the fish in tarpon than any other thing taken with hook and line, and the glittering silver sides, as they sparkle and shine just above the splash, lend beauty to the episode already brimming with life and excitement.

Apart altogether from the magnificent fishing which it affords, Tampico and the vicinity prove decidedly attractive to the sportsman. Sea, surf and river fishing can be found under ideal conditions, while in the winter furred and feathered game abounds. Surf-bathing, fresh tropical fruits, strange fresh customs and conditions, a delightful climate and beautiful scenery all attract and divert the sportsman.

I regret to say that the same indiscriminate slaughter of fish goes on in Mexican waters as that to which I have already referred in connection with duck-shooting. Of recent years there have appeared a number of so-called "sportsmen" from the U.S.A. who have pursued most reckless methods in fishing, even going to the extent of shooting, when within range, with revolvers. Their efforts have been confined mainly to trying how many fish they can slaughter, a circumstance which would disgust most sportsmen who never attempt to make a record in killing. The true sportsman is an artist, and his ambition is usually, with the lightest line and smallest hooks, to endeavour to secure as much sport as possible from the killing of his fish by skill in the handling of delicate apparatus, just as the same man in shooting birds would use a 12-16 bore instead of an 8 bore or swivel-gun. No doubt the Mexican authorities will endeavour to control the indiscriminate killing of fish and game which has been going on now for some time. Unfortunately, however, there are no game laws in Mexico with the exception of two or three States, and even there they are honoured more in the breach than the observance. Up till recently the game of Mexico has been afforded sufficient protection on account of high price of ammunition as well as the fact that the large landowners.



SPORT IN MEXICO.—Tarpon caught by Mr. H. W. Wilson, British Vice-consul at Tampico, April 6th/05, measuring 7 ft. 2½ in. with mouth closed. Weight 200½ lbs.

only afford permission to hunt on their lands in exceptional cases.

Big-game hunting in Mexico has been in vogue for many years, and probably, with the exception of Alaska and Canada and some of the Government and private preserves of the U.S.A. where game is rigidly protected, there is better big-game hunting in Mexico than elsewhere in North America. Strangely enough the Mexicans themselves care very little for this kind of sport, and do nothing to protect game. In the Sierra Madre range of mountains, from the borders of the U.S.A. as far south as the Territory of Tepic, grisly, cinnamon and brown bear are fairly numerous, while white-tailed deer and mountain lions are found in every State of the Republic. On the plains of Sonora, Chihuahua, Durango, Coahuila, and on the northern edge of San Luis Potosi, antelope are numerous, as are burra deer; a very large variety of the black-tailed species also exist in big droves, the bucks sometimes weighing over 300 lbs. In the forests on the plains and foot-hills of both coasts the jaguar or spotted tiger is commonly encountered. Deer, peccary, *tejones* (a variety of badger), and wild-cats are everywhere among the brush and jungle on the coast and foot-hill country, but one of the greatest drawbacks to hunting here are the millions of ticks which swarm on every tree and every bush, and which it is impossible to avoid while passing through the jungle. Mosquitoes are also another pest, and are fiercer, larger, and more poisonous in some parts of Mexico than any country I have visited.

Hunting parties are easily made-up, a convenient number being from four to seven guns with from eight to twenty beaters to stir up the game. The early morning is the best time to start, just before daylight. Several deer, a half-dozen peccary, a coyote or two and a badger, as well as anything between 50 and 100 wild duck, turkeys, or geese make an ordinary day's "bag."

Cock-fighting is one of the national games of Mexico, and has almost as many votaries as bull-fighting. The combatants are termed "los gallos" just as fighting bulls are called "los toros." A good game-cock frequently costs as much as a horse, but this is perhaps not saying very much, seeing that a moderately good saddle-horse can be acquired for \$15

(£1 10s.) or even less, while a game-cock may bring \$50 (£5), and occasionally \$100 (£10). The usual price, however, is from \$12 to \$25 according to the weight, breed and past record as to the strain as fighters. The best birds come from the U.S.A., and many hundreds are shipped to Mexico during the course of the year, they being in special demand during the *fiestas*, of which there are an inordinate number in the twelvemonth. Many fine game-cocks are also bred in the Republic, the hens being largely Japanese. The birds are taken great care of by special trainers, who feed, clean and exercise them as regularly as jockeys their horses. The house is in reality a stable, each cock having his own stall with his name inscribed above it, such as "El Garreon" (The Sparrow), "Chato" (Snubnose), "Tesorero" (Treasurer), "Tirante" (Tyrant), "Gato" (Cat). In their respective stalls the cocks eat, drink and sleep, being fastened by a cord to a ring in the floor. Each morning they are taken out for a run, one at a time, and each one has half an hour in the dirt box to roll and dust himself. The fight itself is accompanied by great ceremony, but the birds are seldom fought before they are 2 years old. Some cocks go through five and six battles, their wounds being sometimes clean cut, and easily healed on this account. Heavy players stake as much as \$1,000 (£100) on a single fight. Each trainer has a small box filled with knives, and from this he selects one, slender and sharp as a razor and curved like a small *machete*. The length varies from 3 to 4 inches according to the weight of the bird, to whose right foot it is attached, the shaft being wrapped around at the ankle with a piece of soft leather.

The knives fixed, the cocks are patted on the back, pinched, and poked at each other, or allowed to peck once or twice at some outsider in order to excite them. Some trainers, from a motive never explained, spit on their heads. Immediately the birds are put down in opposite corners, they fly at each other, and not infrequently one drops at the first shock. The whole battle seldom lasts over one or two minutes.

As in all Spanish-American countries, the bull-ring, or "plaza de toros," is the great national amusement. In Mexico City there are three bull-rings, the largest of which is a huge wooden structure, of the well-known Roman Coliseum

form, situated at the extreme end of La Piédad, a continuation of the Paséo de Bucareli. The seating accommodation is divided into two different sections, the shady (*sombra*) and the sunny (*sol*), the latter being for the commoner part of the audience. In the first-named the seats range in prices from \$64 (£6 8s.) for a box with 8 seats, to a single admission price of \$5 (10s.); the cheaper seats range from \$2 (4s.) to \$3.25 (6s. 6d.).

Although every foreign visitor to Mexico condemns bull-fighting as "barbarous," I have never yet encountered one who had not visited the exhibition. Those Britishers who condemn the show are among the first to pay a visit to the ring, and seem to be ignorant of the fact that it is not so many years ago since bull-baiting was carried on in England, and was highly esteemed by our grandfathers and great-grandfathers as rare sport. As late as the time of George IV. this amusement formed "a delightful recreation" for the fashionable world. Fierce dogs were specially bred for worrying the bull, which was tied to a stake within an enclosure. Herein comes the danger of throwing stones while living in glass houses!