

DRUMMING FOR RUFFED GROUSE

Evidence That the Wild and Wary Game Birds Can Be Lured by the Hunter.

TWO OCTOGENARIAN SPORTS

Game Record of the Wiggins Brothers in the Big Thicket of Texas.

"I notice," said a native of the Pennsylvania woods, "that a good many persons are disputing the assertion that the wild and wary ruffed grouse can be lured to the hunter's gun by an imitation of the cock grouse's peculiar drumming; and that reminds me...

"In the days before the law limited the number of birds to a bag and prevented the sale of any certain pot hunter of our halliwick brought to town at regular intervals during the season so many more pheasants, as the grouse were called, than any one else that suspicion a long time hovered over him as to the strict legality of the methods he used in bagging his birds.

"It was known that this hunter did not hunt with a dog, and the difficulty of negotiating a bag of ruffed grouse according to the rules of true sport and the act of Assembly was obvious. There was never any evidence that he snared the birds, but then the removal of the evidences of snaring was a possible thing.

"Then some one made the curious discovery that every bird this hunter brought in was a cock. The question naturally arose, if he snared his pheasants is it likely that none but cock pheasants would push their necks into his snares? And if he shoots them free in the woods, why doesn't he ever kill any hens? Nobody could answer, and mystery thus taking the place of suspicion the question was put bluntly to the hunter when he came to town again:

"Tom, how do you manage to get all your pheasants anyhow?"

"I shoot 'em, of course," replied the hunter.

"Free and in the open?"

"Of course! Why not?"

"But why is it that you always shoot cock pheasants?"

"Cause that's the only kind I shoot."

"And that being all the information Tom would give on the subject the mystery of his pheasant bagging remained unsolved until one day a sportsman who had been spending a week after grouse in that mysterious hunter's vicinity came home and announced that he had solved it.

"Tom drums for 'em," said he. "That's how he gets 'em."

"This left the mystery still unsolved so far as the rest of us were concerned, and the returning sportsman proceeded to clear it up.

"He was on his way through the woods when he heard the sound of a cock pheasant drumming. He had never had a chance to shoot at it drumming and he resolved to stalk upon this one and watch the performance.

"He crept noiselessly along and by and by came within sight of a log from which the drumming seemed to come. The log was not more than fifty feet away, but nowhere about it could he see the drumming pheasant. The hunter, wondering how it was possible for the bird to conceal itself so completely, was on the point of stealing around to get a look from another direction when his eye caught a movement on the ground among the leaves and undergrowth a long way beyond the far end of the log.

"The movement was made by a pheasant that appeared out of the laurels. At first he hiddenly crept through this way the pheasant that had done the drumming, but the sudden stoppage of his listening and then right from the log rose the sound of the drumming again. The instant the sound was thus repeated the pheasant hopped on a small decayed log and beating its wings against its side sent forth a resounding response to the challenge from the log. Then jumping from the log the bird came hurriedly, with wing tips drooping and dragging on the ground and ruff standing erect, toward the spot where its challenger was hidden.

"In momentary expectation of witnessing a desperate battle between two angry pheasant cocks the hunter lay breathless in his concealment. The advancing cock had come to within fifty yards of the log when from behind the log there came a sudden flash and the report of a gun broke the stillness. The advancing cock lay fluttering on the ground with a death wound, and scattering a covering of brush and leaves that had concealed him up rose Tom, the pot hunter, gun in hand.

"The startled sportsman likewise rose from his hiding place and the two stood staring at each other. Then Tom recovered his composure and with a grin said:

"That's how I do it!"

"The mystery was solved. A hoop from a nail log, on which was stretched a skin making a sort of rattle tambourine, was part of the hunter's equipment. He said the skin was tanned from a woodchuck's pelt. He had discovered the utility of the contrivance in giving forth an exact imitation of the cock grouse's drumming when he was with a ruffed stick in the hands of one who could give the proper manipulation. This hunter had acquired the necessary skill in handling the instrument so that he could send forth unerringly the sound that would bring any cock pheasant within hearing toward the place of his concealment in response to the challenge. Tom's success in handling the drumming tambourine was well shown right then, for although it was still early in the day he had nine pheasants already in his bag. He had shot them free as he had shot his pheasants, but of course none of our sportsmen could regard his method as sportsmanlike at the same time with a ruffed stick in the hands of one who could give a singularly lively demand for small game hoops, and I remember to have seen fellows out hunting for groundhogs who had been known to even rabbits as beneath consideration as marks for their guns. I never heard of any of them succeeding in becoming expert enough in imitating the drumming of the cock grouse to lure the birds to their guns, but that birds could be lured and shot by a pot hunter, let me say, Tom, the pot hunter, let me say, no doubt.

"And there's no doubt either that they

can be lured in other ways, as I can testify. Israel Barnhardt of Sullivan county, New York, learned how to do it from his grandfather ago and he has practiced it successfully ever since. He has a method of his own, simple and in his hands infallible.

"Barnhardt's famous guide and hunter, and while he never goes out on purpose to bag his grouse by drumming them in, he likewise never resists an opportunity to try the drumming method on his offers. He has his dogs trained to know the possibilities of this feat in grouse hunting.

"During his scouting of the covers he comes to a log in the woods which he identifies as one that cock grouse use for drumming he prepares at once for action. Utter and complete concealment is required, he lies perfectly undisturbed by Barnhardt's dogs. At a word from him they instantly hide and lie as still as if they were dead dogs.

"Then concealing himself alongside of the log, Barnhardt takes the right lapel of his canvas hunting coat in his left hand, draws it tightly across his chest on the right side and with his right hand he clenches it in a way that reproduces the drumming sound of the cock grouse so naturally that it never fails to fool any cock within hearing of it.

"I have witnessed Barnhardt's performance of this trick I never heard a cock answer the drumming and never heard one make any sound in approaching the hunter, but he was aware of the sound of the bird only when he catches sight of it moving toward the log. Sometimes after Barnhardt has drummed what he considers long enough to lure a cock into the woods and move on only to flush one or more cocks that were on the way in answer to his drumming.

"I have myself lured grouse within gun range by this method, and the drumming produced by knocking a pebbled smooth round stone against a peeled spot on the trunk of a hardwood tree. This gives so nearly a perfect reproduction of the drumming sound of the cock grouse that it is a matter of surprise that he does not come to the log in the fall that even the most cautious and suspicious old cock could be excused for taking it for the genuine thing.

THE HELPFUL BEAVER.

One of the First and Best of the Western Conservationists.

"I read in THE SUN how the beavers of Colorado had striven for a benefit as conservationists by their dams which have retarded the floods that otherwise would have done so much damage to the mountain sides and denuded the slopes of their soil and trees," said T. B. Gilroy, a one time ranchman in Montana, "and that reminds me how that busy little dam builder was a pioneer and useful conservationist in Montana in the days of the cattle trail. A beaver wasn't worth as much by a good many dollars as a fat steer was, but there wasn't a cattle man in Montana in those days or anywhere else on the ranges where beaver were yet to be found who wouldn't have given up the best steer in his herd to save the life of a beaver.

"The cattlemen had good reason for saying every beaver they had a chance to get was a fast and unchangeable friend. That industrious and hard working little animal, everybody knows that beavers build dams. They build their dams to provide against hunger in the winter when everything green that is of any use to them as food has lost its sap and nutritious qualities as such. The beaver lives on the bark of cottonwood and willow and other succulent barks, and to be of service to him as food those barks must be kept fresh and full of life.

"The beaver's wonderful instinct tells him that this can be done by keeping them submerged in water, and so he dams the shallow currents of streams so that the collected water above the dam will form a deep pool and a cover for his winter food. His limbs he has planted there and keep them fresh and sappy, they being driven into the soft bottom of the pond by the wise little animal far enough to anchor them there upright and keep them intact until they are needed for use in the colony's commissary department.

"This wonderful instinct of the beaver never interested the ranchmen a little bit so far as it concerned the object of it, nor had they any sentiment in protecting the beaver as such, but water is a constant necessity on the cattle trails in the dry climate of Montana. In the days I speak of there were more beavers in Montana perhaps than anywhere else in the country, and that may be the case you may say they were protected by the cattlemen. By building their dams wherever they might they caused the water supply out there to be hoarded as it could be in no other way, for that was long before the time of storage dams and irrigating operations.

"That storing of the water by the beavers just suited the cattlemen, and so while all other game and fur bearing animals were being exterminated the beaver was assured of the friendship and respect of the ranchmen as it was in their power to befriend and protect. The beavers seemed to be aware of this fact for in the range country they carried on their industrial operations fearlessly in the presence of the cattlemen's habitation. I have watched a colony of beavers by the hour at their work of constructing a dam, and a person who has never done so himself can't but wonder it can have no conception of the amazing genius for engineering that guides this animal at its work. No human skill or ingenuity can equal it.

"In choosing a place for building a dam across a stream beaver first consider the condition of the current. If it is sluggish the dam will be thrown straight across from side to side, but if the current is rapid the dam is built on a curve. A soft bottom spot is always chosen. The timbers for the dam are cut by the beavers at some point up the stream, ready to transport size and under saplings being felled by them with the facility of an axeman, cut into the desired lengths and floated down to the site of the dam by the members of the colony set to the doing of it.

"The engineers and constructors take the timbers as they come down and utilize them without a moment's delay. A way is made for the water to pass over than five minutes, yet an old and experienced dam builder among them will seize a piece of timber that has been cut out for the purpose, dive to the bottom and by some simple manipulation unknown to man fix it upright and in solid on the muddy bottom in the few minutes he can work beneath the surface. In an intricate and delicate manipulation he will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

"Others are busy carrying mortar made of mud and leaves and twigs, all mixed and kneaded to the proper condition and quality for use with which they plaster over the crevices and fill the holes and by some simple manipulation they will have set a row of these timbers, while other busy workers felled the logs and poles and branches down stream and sink them one on top of another across the stream, until the platform of piles or poles and fasten them by weaving the flexible branches in and out among them.

of the Lone Star State. "The Big Thicket is a tremendous area of almost inaccessible wilderness lying between the Sabine and Trinity rivers, and dividing the long leaf pine region of the sandy plains from the loblolly pine territory nearer the coast. It is from five to seven miles wide and inhabited to-day by the deer, wild life, some of the most and savage, that dwell in its fastnesses when the first settlers found that Texas was a promising place to cast their Texas.

"When the two Wiggins boys, Bill and Dick, took their annual hunt in the Big Thicket last year they thought they found the game they were after a little more plentiful than it had ever been before, but they contented themselves with fetching away three bears, six deer, two of the biggest and fiercest panthers the Thicket was ever known to produce and a few bobcats for good measure. One of the panthers had a measurement of eight feet three inches in length. The boys had started a time bagging a mass of thick woods and their three dogs took his trail and followed it so closely that the panther tried. One dog was so hot on the trail though that he got to the tree in time to take a running jump and grab the big beast by the flank, although it was six feet above the ground.

"When the two boys got there they found the dog holding on to the panther, suspended in air. The dog was Hi Knox's man trailing bloodhound Mitchell. He could have pulled any ordinary panther loose from his hold and brought him back to earth to fight it out there, but this one was too strenuous even for that great dog, and he scrambled on up the tree, taking Mitchell along ten feet further, when the dog lost his jaw hold and tumbled back to the ground.

"The panther went on up the tree about forty feet higher, and then one of the Wiggins boys, Bill it was, turned his 33 special against him and down the panther came. Up he went again, though, in a second, and zip! he went for William's throat.

"Then the dog Mitchell saw his chance and set his jaws together on the panther's haunch again and the ferocious varmint let go of Bill and buckled in with the dog. It was a pretty fight while it lasted, and both Bill and his brother took a hand in it. The dog was so hot on the panther that the panther was getting his work in on the dog's belly with his claws so effectively that Bill grabbed his gun and socked another into the panther's snout and sent him flying.

"The biggest bear the boys killed was brought down by Dick, and he had to make two shots of it, and even between the two shots it was so able that it killed one dog and ripped another out of commission.

"The boys weren't in the Big Thicket to bother with rabbits of the like of that, but one day Dick saw a jack rabbit so big that he gathered it in just as a curiosity. In doing that, though, he did more than gather the jack rabbit in. The rabbit was sitting on a log, and he was so big that it seemed to be all its surroundings. It tumbled over when the shot hit it, and when Dick went to pick it up he was obliged to put an end to it with a second shot. There is hardly a foot in length and had thirteen rattles on its tail before he could take hold of the rabbit. Although that snake had a red beard, it was not the one that the Big Thicket boys are so fond of. It had designs on the big jack rabbit and had hypnotized it, which accounted for the rabbit sitting listlessly there, oblivious to all about him.

"We don't think it worth any more than just ordinary everyday comment down in Polk county, the getting ready for the Wiggins boys to go into the Big Thicket. It is a still more vigorous campaign against the wild critters that dwell in that otherwise uninhabited domain than they usually pull off, but it might strike you up here as something a little out of the ordinary hunting stunt.

"But the two Wiggins boys are pretty near enough taking the country by the nose. I guess. One of 'em, Bill, is now. 'Other one, Dick, is 58. Neither of 'em ever owned a pair of spectacles, for they never had any use for 'em. Bill said he had a pair of spectacles, but he has got the same teeth every one of 'em as he shed his baby teeth. So has Dick."

BAGGED A COON.

Really Got It in a Bag, and by Doing So This Lad Avoided a Threshing.

"Ever since the time a con I bagged licked Farmer Bill Badger and put him to flight," said Kit Buckingham, who sells guns, can make them too, and knows how to shoot with them. I have held that family of ringtoned night roamers in high regard. Not that the con deserves a special credit for licking Farmer Bill Badger, but if it hadn't licked him Farmer Bill Badger would have everlastingly licked me, so, metaphorically speaking, I take my hat off to the whole con family.

"When I say I bagged that con I mean bagged in the literal sense. It happened out in Ohio, when I was a youngster. I wasn't out to bag coons, either.

"Squirrels of all kinds were plenty in the woods. Gray and black squirrels seemed to choose for their homes trees with hollows in them that had openings near the ground. Into these hollows would pop when alarmed. A hunter with a gun might wait a long time for them to come out and the shot and then be fooled, and that was the peculiarity of the squirrel. I hit on a scheme that I never would yield me a mess of the cunning little bushy tails any time I went out after them.

"And it worked. I took an empty feed bag one day and went into the woods with my dog Gray, a black and white mongrel with a peculiar bark which would start a squirrel for its hole the minute he let it loose in the woods if there was a squirrel within hearing. The dog and I hadn't got far into the woods when he set up his bark, and out of a bunch of long seed grass jumped two big black squirrels. They went like a flash for a big poplar tree into a hole in which they disappeared.

"I quit the working of my scheme. I placed the open mouth of the bag over the hole in the tree, and getting a long pole pounded with it on the side of the tree. A great scratching inside the hollow trunk followed, and down out of it came the frightened squirrels. Out of the hole at the bottom they popped and into the bag. I grabbed the bag, drew the puckering string, and my two squirrels were bagged. Whacking the bag against the tree, I knocked the life out of the squirrels, took them out and stuffed them in my pockets, and was ready for another haul. The dog just went wild with joy when he saw the point of my scheme, and we had the greatest day's sport in squirrel hunting that any one had ever had in the country.

"One cloudy day the dog Gray and I were out for some fun with squirrels. Farmer Bill Badger owned the bit of woods we were working in and it was hickory nut time. Farmer Badger wasn't at all popular with the boys. He had bushels and bushels of hickory nuts in his woods, but he used to lay a round in hiding with a horse whip ready to pounce on any boy who ventured to seek his woods to get a peck or so of nuts.

"Once another-boy-and I were taking

the chances on getting a few nuts without Farmer Bill knowing it. They were falling from their hulls the nicest kind and we had gathered a four sack full apiece. We had tied the sacks all ready to shoulder and make our escape with them and the next moment when I saw my dog Gray drop his tail between his