

WILLIAM ADAMS

TWENTY-SIX YEARS
REMINISCENCES OF
SCOTCH GROUSE
MOORS

William Adams

**Twenty-Six Years Reminiscences
of Scotch Grouse Moors**

«Public Domain»

Adams W.

Twenty-Six Years Reminiscences of Scotch Grouse Moors /
W. Adams — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Season 1863	7
Season 1864	9
Season 1865	11
Season 1866	14
Season 1867	16
Season 1868	17
Season 1869	19
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	20

William Alexander Adams

Twenty-Six Years Reminiscences of Scotch Grouse Moors

My grouse shooting days are now past. Increasing years and rheumatic muscles remind me that I have had my time, and a very good time too, so now let younger men take my place and profit by my experience, if it should so please them.

Let us look back on grouse shooting twenty-six years ago. Scotland, so far as regards the sporting of the far north, was then almost a *terra incognita*.

Railways ended at Inverness, and to get there needed a journey to Aberdeen, and from there by the slowest of slow railways, but quick enough – life was not run at so fast a pace as now.

The more remote districts of the north and west of Scotland were as unknown as the wilds of Labrador.

Previous to that time grouse shooting was for the few; we were content with our English shootings, and very nice and pleasant they were.

Every farmer, if the shooting was in his take, preserved his game; he shot it or he let it. The stubbles were long and full of weeds, the old pastures full of feg, and there was plenty of clover, but turnips not so much grown as now, excepting in the eastern counties, about which I know very little, the hedges and ditches not kept clean as they are now.

There was much less of hand rearing of pheasants; the hens were spared certainly the second time through, and nice mixed bags were made in covert with hares and rabbits and wild pheasants, hand rearing partridges being scarcely known.

Hares are now gone consequent on the Ground Game Act, and without them the farmer does not find it worth while to preserve, as the shooting will not let without ground game.

The open shooting was mostly done by two guns shooting together over dogs; in fact, you could not find your birds or fur without them.

How I made acquaintance with my first grouse was very funny; I will tell the tale:

I was at Scarborough with my wife and family, and, talking shooting in the smoke room of the hotel, I was told as a great joke about the shooting on a moor of about 3000 acres near Pickering that was commonage, and free to anybody; of course, that was nonsense, the only parties having the rights of sporting were the commoners, and all others were trespassers; but that did not now matter, anybody shot upon it, but since then the commoners have been wise enough to join together and let the shooting rights at a very handsome rent.

Well, I was fired with the desire of seeing a grouse on the wing. It was rather slow for me at the seaside. I fancy that most paterfamilias find it so. Saying nothing, and cogitating the matter over, I determined to begin my first Twelfth, and accordingly I sent for a brace of my dogs from the south.

The shooting being free, it was necessary to be on the moor before daylight. Therefore I went over to Pickering by train in the afternoon of the eleventh, had some dinner at the inn, and hired a trap and man to drive me over, the driver to officiate as gilly or keeper, and, he being a Yorkshireman, anything in the way of sport could not come amiss to him. I found him keen as mustard to get me on the ground in good time, and at a good starting point.

With the first gleam of twilight the moor was ablaze with the fire of some thirty or more guns.

My first grouse was down before I could see him. Something fluttered up, I shot in the line, down came a bird, and to my intense delight I handled my first grouse – a fine old cock bird.

In three hours the whole thing was over, every bird not killed was put off on to neighbouring ground.

I had managed to get two and a half brace, and thought myself very lucky. I dare say a hundred brace were got off in that short three hours.

I took myself away to Saltergate Inn, a comfortable wash up, some breakfast, and a nap, and in the afternoon quietly back to Pickering, and home to dinner.

That finished my grouse shooting for that season, but I had caught grouse fever.

The following season I joined some other men for a few days' shooting over dogs on a small moor in the county of Durham, and had a few pleasant enjoyable days, getting, perhaps, thirty brace in all. At that time grouse sat very fairly well to dogs for the first ten days in the English counties, as they now do in Perthshire and Aberdeenshire, but there was nothing like the quantity of birds on the English moors that there are now. One odd thing may be remarked: In all my sporting career I never shot but one curlew, and that was on this moor. Of birds, they are the wariest of the wary.

Season 1863

The grouse fever was upon me at full fever heat, and I was determined that I would solve the problem of Scotch grouse shooting, and, finding in the spring of this season that an Aberdeen innkeeper advertised shooting, I wrote to him to know if he could put me in the way of a small place for one gun. Of course he replied glowingly, and said that a small moor by Gartly station, in Aberdeenshire, then on his hands, was quite enough for one gun, that capital lodgings were to be had at the merchant's house, and the price of the shooting for three weeks would be but £50.

I felt quite certain that I should be done, but I also knew that knowledge and experience could only be had by paying for it, so I plunged to what was not a very costly plunge, and accordingly I sent down my English keeper from Warwickshire.

In those days trains to Scotland did not afford the luxuries of to-day. Sleepers were unknown, and in the first-class carriage the elbow did not double up. The extreme of luxury was a second-class compartment retained for two men, and bed up the best way you could.

I was again at Scarborough. It was a slow, weary business to travel to York by a stopping train, and then the whole night and half next day getting to Aberdeen. So I bethought myself of asking the London and Aberdeen S.S. Co. to take me off at Scarborough. This they agreed to do if I would lie off in the offing and wait for the boat.

I went off in the afternoon of the day. It was a fine day, fortunately, and I watched ship after ship, and at last, about 4 p.m., the big paddle wheels of the steamer loomed up.

It was the crack boat of the Aberdeen S.S. Co.; she had been chartered as a transport during the Crimean war, and was the only ship that rode out, or steamed out, the heavy gale off Balaclava that wrecked so many of our ships.

She tried to take me on board without a full stop, but I would not see it, and drifted a long way astern, causing considerable delay; but at last I was got up the side.

The captain swore great guns at the idea of stopping his ship for one passenger. I agreed with him and recommended him to swear at his directors in London; and verily believe he would have sworn at them if he had had them there to swear at.

A smooth and lovely passage, arriving at Aberdeen about 11 a.m. next morning.

On arriving off the coast of Fife we ran through a school of whales, spouting and tumbling about in the most idiotic manner.

Arrived at Aberdeen I lunched at my friend the innkeeper's, who impressed me with the exceeding merits of my take, and the grouse I should get.

In the afternoon I was away by train to Gartly, and there found my keeper and dogs.

The lodgings were very plain, but good enough, and there, fortunately for me as turned out, also, lodging and shooting a moor rented from my innkeeper at Aberdeen, was that grand old sportsman the late Mr. Ginger Stubbs.

I am pretty certain that, my £50 being in view, that my bit of ground was cut off from Stubbs moor as an afterthought.

Mr. Stubbs was excellent company, and very good-naturedly he taught me a great many useful things that I desired to know about grouse shooting.

My moor was truly small: about an hour in the morning hunted it, and then I let it rest till the afternoon, giving birds time to work back home. The whole bag was about thirty brace of grouse, some grand brown hares, and a few sundries.

One of my dogs, never having been on grouse, until she saw them killed, took no more notice of them than she would of chickens.

A fortnight finished it, and I returned to England wiser in grouse lore than when I went. The £50 was well spent.

The novelty, the pure air, the heather hills, in fact, the whole thing, was delightful; it gave me a very considerable insight into grousing matters, and a knowledge of grouse moors in that locality, that was eventually of considerable use to me, and Stubbs put me right in many ways.

According to the fashion of the times I was shooting with a gun of 7-1/4lb. weight, and I was still further handicapping myself by holding my left hand too near the trigger guard.

"You shoot with too much gun," says Stubbs; "push out your left hand along the barrels."

On my way south the Aberdeen innkeeper asked me to join a party that he was making up to attend the Highland sports that were to be held at Mar Lodge. I was nothing loth, and joined the party.

He took us down very comfortably along Dee side in a four horse omnibus, driven by himself, and gave me the box seat by his side. I think that he felt some compunction about the little do in respect to the moor "that was enough for one gun."

I forgave freely enough.

Everything was well arranged, rooms having been taken beforehand at the Hotel at Braemar.

The Prince and Princess of Wales were there (it was just after their marriage), and, of course, a great number of notables to meet them.

The whole affair was a large garden party; the railway being only open to Aberdeen, and the hotels in the locality not being so numerous or extensive as they are now, there was no crowding on the ground.

I did not care much for the sports, in fact, I never could see much in Highland sports, but other people do, so let them enjoy them, but my trip pleased me very much.

And so ended my first experience of Highland shooting.

Season 1864

In the spring I prepared for another campaign, I felt that I knew all about grouse moors and could take care of myself, but I had yet much to learn.

I enquired in all directions, and came across a gentleman who leased a large moor in Perthshire, the Glenshee moor, extending from the Spital of Glenshee to within a few miles of Braemar.

It was called 30,000 acres, probably might be 20,000.

The representations made to me were very good, and I was referred to a gentleman in Birmingham, who had shot there one or more seasons, and who quite truthfully gave me a very good account, so far as his experience went.

The moor was shot by four guns, shooting in two parties, I took one gun at £100, finding my share of dogs, ponies, gillies, &c., and I very naturally congratulated myself that I was well landed, and could not be otherwise than in for a good thing, and safe from all pitfalls left open for the unwary.

There was no lodge in Glenshee in those days, and it had to be shot from the Spital Inn.

The guns had to ride ponies from three to eight miles to get to their beats, men and dogs walking on beforehand, so that nearly half the time and labour was taken up in travelling to and fro', but as it turned out it did not matter much.

The moor was a fine moor, with fine heather, but with too much green ground upon it.

It included some of the high Grampians, and marched with the Mar Forest on the one end, and with Caen Lochan Forest on the east side.

For those who cared to climb 3000 feet and more, and risk sprained limbs on the roughest of broken rocks and boulders, there was a fair sprinkling of ptarmigan.

I was fairly well dogged, I had my brace of dogs, and beforehand on faith I had bought a middle aged pointer bitch from the keeper for £5, and a very good purchase she was; later on I bred some very good puppies from her and my dog Rap, and in addition to her I had my brace of dogs and my English keeper to complete my team.

We all reached the Spital, hiring from Blairgowrie, a day or two before the 12th, in high spirits and hopes for the coming fray.

The morning after our arrival my keeper came to me with a very long face, he had got it from the gillie that we were done, fairly done brown, that there was literally nothing on the ground. The moor was very high, nothing under 1500 feet above the sea, rising to 3000 feet, the limit of heather, and a severe snow storm late on in the spring had killed the young birds and driven down the old ones to lower ground, the lower moors below us were full of birds.

I was very down in the mouth. I had, as I thought, taken every precaution, and was also rather full of my cleverness at getting into what I took to be so good a thing, and had bragged considerably; but at the same time would scarcely credit that such an extent of fine ground could hold nothing. I said nothing, but waited for the outcome.

On the morning of the Twelfth we went through the usual routine of ponies, pannier ponies, gillies, dogs, &c., returning at night with a dozen brace of old birds amongst us, perhaps not so many.

The next day the same farce was enacted on another side of the moor, with worse results.

That night there was a great talk of what could be done with deer. In October, perhaps, something might be done, but in August they were well kept in by the Mar and Caen Lochan Foresters, and the talk ended where it began.

After that my keeper and I scrambled about on the high hills, after ptarmigan, an odd grouse, a hare or two. One day I managed to get six brace of ptarmigan and some dotterel – and very pretty birds they were.

Ptarmigan are curious birds on the Glenshee hills, the ground being so desperately rough it needed all your wits to walk and take care of your gun, marking down the birds as they fluttered up like pigeons.

It was useless to shoot at a bird unless you could make sure to kill him outright, as the wounded birds crept into holes amongst the rocks like rabbits.

When the birds were marked down you got to them the best way you could, and had to look very sharp to distinguish them from the colour of the stones as they crept about. You would then shoot one on the ground, and take another as they rose.

The old cock birds in their summer plumage were very handsome birds.

I soon had enough, and in about a fortnight made tracks for the south.

But before going south I suggested to the boss of the shooting, who had let me the gun, that, as he must have known before he let it what the state of things would be, he should, anyhow, return one half the money, and that more especially as there was one corrie that held birds, and, at the solicitation of the keeper, I had let them alone, being the only breeding stock left to him, but I could make nothing of him. One of the other guns, whom I will call Fred, and who had shot there several seasons, also pressed the matter sharply, but his blandishments were of no effect, and Fred was so annoyed that he said he would shoot there no more, and would be glad to join with me in taking a place, if we could find one pretty accessible, that would carry two guns shooting together.

In those days there were practically no agents, in the modern acceptance of the term, excepting Snowie, of Inverness. There were, also, very few advertisements, and accessible moors were in no great plenty, and such as there were, were let to permanent tenants, who renewed their leases at the old rents; in fact, it was pretty much the rule that so long as the old tenant chose to remain there should be no rise of rent. Times were then easy with landowners, and they were easy with their tenants.

Season 1865

I kept a careful watch over the advertisements in the *Field* and other papers, and in the spring I noted the following advertisement on a certain Saturday:

"To be let, the Shootings of Glenmarkie, in Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, extending over 11,000 acres of moor and low ground; references to last tenant. Application to be made to Mr. Snowie, of Inverness, or the Law Agents in Edinburgh."

I did not sleep upon it, but wrote that night to my law agents in Edinburgh, asking them to call first thing on Monday morning upon the advertisers, and telegraph me the rent and the name of last tenant. The reply was prompt; the late tenant was Mr. Thos. Powell, of Newport, Mon.; proprietors, the Fife Trustees; the rent, £265. I telegraphed immediately to a mutual friend at Newport, and received my reply on the Tuesday morning by letter.

Mr. Powell reported that it was a capital moor, with splendid birds, and lots of them, but needed to be shot quickly, as they packed early; that, in addition to grouse, there were a great number of large brown hares on the lower beats, but that he could say nothing about the partridges and snipe on the low ground as he had never troubled with them.

Mr. Powell had given up the place to take some very large deer forest, but that did not satisfy him, and some of my readers will probably remember that not very long afterwards, whilst on a shooting expedition after big game in Abyssinia, accompanied by his wife and family, the whole party were massacred.

Fred knew the moor perfectly well at second hand through a friend who had shot upon it a few years previously, and two years before at Gartly I had gathered information about this identical moor, so, without delay, by 10 a.m. on Tuesday morning, I had telegraphed my Edinburgh agents to close a seven years lease at £265, which, as my agents could satisfy the proprietors' agents as to my eligibility as a tenant, was at once agreed to, and so Fred and I were joined in what proved a very pleasant partnership.

To illustrate the keenness for really good places in those days at the moderate rents at which things went, a Staffordshire gentleman had written on the Saturday for particulars of the moor, and was replied to in due course on the Monday.

He accepted by letter on the Tuesday, but by telegraph I had instructed my agents to conclude the matter, and was thus before him.

Having taken the shooting, the next best thing was to go and look at it.

The bulk of the grouse ground was in Banff, and extended over about 7000 acres, including 1000 acres adjoining, that we rented at £15 a year from a neighbouring proprietor.

In addition to the grouse ground there was about 3000 acres of rough hills, partly in gorse, bracken, broom, patches of heather, and rough pastures.

This rough ground carried a goodly number of grouse, beside snipe, golden plover, brown hares, and some few rabbits.

The low ground consisted of about 2000 acres of small arable farms prettily mixed up with the rough ground and the lower beats of the moorland.

There were enormous brown hares everywhere excepting on the higher grouse beats.

The moorland was full of grouse, and the heather splendid, but had not been sufficiently and judiciously burnt.

One hill side of about 1500 acres, nearly a fourth of the grouse ground, was deep old heather all in one patch, without a break in it.

It was frightfully dangerous in case of fire, as the whole would have swept away in one terrific blaze.

It was late in the season, but at once we put in two belts of burning, dividing it into four, and the next season burnt it properly in strips, improving the feeding and nesting ground.

On the one side we were bounded by the river Deveron, and there was salmon fishing, but they were late, and as red as mahogany, and also very stiff to rise; in fact, the few that we had were taken with the worm in the rocky pools, so the salmon fishings were very little worth. The trout fishing was not much account, though in the month of May fair baskets could be made during the rise of the March brown.

The lodge was small but well enough situated, just seven miles from Huntley. As a matter of course the windows looked on to the wrong point of view, but that is almost always the case in the older shooting lodges. There was a small but very productive garden between the lodge and the river; at end of August and beginning of September the bush fruit and the strawberries were splendid.

The situation of the lodge by the river side was very pleasant, and made gay by flowering annuals, which were much brighter in colour than those grown in the south.

We were very fortunate in the minister, who was a gentleman and a scholar, and we liked the schoolmaster.

Little more than a stone's throw from the manse was a salmon pool, and regularly after breakfast and after tea, no matter the state of water or weather, our old minister fished the pool once up and once down, it might take him five to ten minutes.

He was very reticent as to his success, but our impression was that he had about a fish a week the season through – of course he would fish blank during drought, but he fished away all the same.

Our next door neighbour was Beldornie, with its little old fashioned castle, a habitable castle, and let as the lodge for the Beldornie shooting, and the banks of the river between our lodge and the castle were pretty steep and beautifully wooded with natural hazel, birch and ash.

The kennels were pretty good, and as Fred and I shot together, three or four brace of dogs did us well.

We were well dogged for the 12th, with my three dogs and three of Fred's; one of his was a queer beast, a rough-looking rugged Russian setter. He was honest, staunch, and industrious, and quartered his ground well, but nothing would stop him, you might whistle and whistle till you were hoarse until he got into the neighbourhood of birds, and then down he sat on his rump and would wait, aye an hour if need be. Very rarely did he spring birds, as he did not draw upon them until you were with him. On one occasion so far did he go that we uncoupled another dog and worked up to him, getting birds on the way until we attended to his.

Fred and his wife and I went down a few days before the 12th, and he and I had a skirmishing afternoon on part of the rough ground, getting brown hare, snipe, plover, and a rabbit or two.

The grouse ground was in six beats, but on the 12th we went through some of the rough ground, getting thirty-one brace of magnificent birds and some brown hares and sundries, and the next day on a grouse beat about sixty brace, and continued to make good bags for several days, when the weather broke and quickly pulled the joint bags down to thirty and twenty brace a day.

We made about 370 brace, besides a lot of brown hares and sundries, returning south early in September to commence partridge shooting about the 10th of September, which is early enough in most English counties.

To get off a large bag would have needed two more guns shooting in another party, and so take off all that was possible in the first week before the birds began to pack, but we were happy enough, and did not care to cram the little lodge too full.

To show how very ticklish the birds were, shooting four days a week, it would take ten days to get over the beats once, and during our lease we never remember getting over the six beats before a break of weather and the birds packing.

We carried our game, lunches, spare ammunition, &c., on a pannier pony. Our pony man, Geordie Gordon, was a character – he was Jack of all trades, minister's man, clerk to the kirk, and

pony man in the shooting season, and also did what gardening was needed, his dialect the purest Aberdeen, so pure that I always needed an interpreter. He was expected to keep his eyes upon and mark wide birds. On one occasion a bird towered – "Where did he go, did you mark him, Geordie?" "Yes, yes, up, up, up – up there," said Geordie, pointing to the sky.

Season 1866

This season we added three puppies of Nell and Rap's to the kennel; they were liver and white like the old dogs, so we called the family Mr. and Mrs. Rap, and the young Raps, but though the puppies turned out well, none of them came up to old Rap. He would do anything, point, retrieve, catch rats, rabbiting, or anything you liked.

He would do what not one dog in twenty, aye! in fifty, will do: if he had a slant wind of birds he turned back and took a round swing to get his wind properly; with most dogs you have to whistle and work them round by hand.

I bred him from a pure heavy Spanish pointer dog and a well-bred English bitch, but one so rank that her owner gave her to me to breed from, and then make away with her. I kept three puppies out of the litter, but, excepting Rap, although better looking, they were no good – no real work in them. They would have sold well, but I preferred to shoot them to selling the man who would have bought them.

One other very good-looking likely puppy I gave to the old Marquis de la – , but I believe, as the old gentleman made a pet of him, and endowed him with a collar and bells, and would have shaved him had he had anything to shave, that his sporting career was not brilliant.

I came by Rap's father rather oddly: he belonged to a working carpenter, who had picked up the puppy at some nobleman's place where he had been working, had broken him well, and he was a very careful, slow ranger, the very thing for English shooting in the days of stubbles, and I had had my eye upon him all the early summer, and at last, about the middle of August, I negotiated the purchase for £7; but the dog never came, and I could not get to hear anything about him. But in the afternoon of August 31 up comes Mr. Carpenter and his dog to "implement" the bargain, as Scotch people would say. I wanted to know how the delay came about, and, after a lot of cross-questioning, it came out that General – 's coachman and he had agreed that the dog was to be planted on the general at £12, and the difference of £5 to be divided between coachman and carpenter; but the planting did not come off, so in the eleventh hour he was brought up to me, and I was glad to take him.

As Shot, the Spanish dog, grew old, he became very dodgy; he had the run of the house, and would get away and hunt the hedges for the labourer's dinners and bring them home, napkins and all; and, if taken into the town to the butcher's shop, he would go, and, somehow or other, get away unperceived with a piece of meat. He was never caught red handed, at any rate by the butcher, who was consequently accused of base slander.

The staunchness of those Spanish pointers was remarkable. On one occasion he was pointing and roading, and pointing a landrail in a patch of clover; the bird was headed and rose, and flew right towards the dog's mouth. Shot opened his mouth, and closed it on the bird, and then he stood stock still without moving a muscle.

He never attempted to meddle with game or rabbits, but if he came near a tiny rabbit just out of the burrow he would pick him up and bolt him like a pill.

This was a very good season, the second day getting over 100 brace to the two guns, shooting together over the same dogs – getting in all about 400 brace in the season, besides hares and sundries.

But Fred, when we left the place, was full of fear and trembling, as at the latter end we got two or three badly-diseased birds. Fred knew what disease meant; but to me it was something new yet to learn; and, looking at the magnificent stock of fine healthy birds, I made light of his fears.

When we took the place, and afterwards went down to look at it, every inquiry was made as to disease, but not a soul would own to anything. It was stated on all hands that on Glenmarkie disease was a thing unknown, but Fred did not believe in its being so. I daresay many of my readers have been told the same flattering tale about other moors, and with the same results.

Before leaving we discharged the keeper; we could not do with his domineering ways, and, after careful inquiry, we engaged young David Black, a son of a keeper of Lord Airlie's. He came of a good game keeping stock, and was all that we could wish for.

He was married to an Orkney woman; we liked them both, and they have been in my service ever since, which should speak well for master and man.

Season 1867

This was indeed a disastrous season; it was really frightful. Fred's worst fears were more than realised. In the spring disease raged with intense virulence, dead birds lying about in scores on the green ground by the waterside and elsewhere – many in full plumage and apparently in full health. Before the 12th, with the exception of a few broods on the rough ground, there was practically, so to speak, not a bird left upon the grouse ground.

The whole district was in the same condition; and it goes without saying that we did not go near the place. Fred said, gloomily enough, "There will be no grouse shooting for three years," and he was practically right.

David Black reported that the spates on the river brought down dead birds in such quantities as to choke the surface of the eddies and backwaters.

I was almost in despair; I was very keen on the shooting, and I had struggled hard for five years to get it, and realised but two good seasons out of the five.

Season 1868

Of course, we let the grouse alone for this season, as well as in 1867. There were very few to let alone; but the disease was gone, and we comforted ourselves the best way we could with the low-ground shooting in October.

David Black had worked up the low ground well. When we first took the place there were very few partridges. The first season there was a covey of twenty-two birds close to the lodge. We let them alone, and they had multiplied, and in addition there were also a few odd pairs in other parts of the ground. We had shot none, and they had had three years jubilee and pretty good breeding seasons.

In these high, stormy countries, during heavy snows the poor things can get very little food, and naturally draw down into the stackyards for food and shelter, and, if not carefully looked after, get potted by the farmer, but are not of much good to him, as they are little better than skin and bone.

Black looked after them. I don't think that our former keeper troubled himself, or the stock would have got up quicker; and there was now a fine stock of all sorts of low-country game, pheasants excepted. Of course, by a fine stock I mean a fine stock for a wild stormy country.

We had a most enjoyable fortnight's shooting over dogs. In the twelve days we managed to make a mixed bag of 600 head – partridge, snipe, plover, brown hares, rabbits, &c.

The grouse we let alone, except a stray old cock now and again that had survived through the epidemic – very handsome to look at, but, like the monarch of the glen, very tough, and unsavoury on the table.

Of course, on that wild ground the covies of partridges were, looking at the extent of ground, few and far between.

The dogs hunted the small turnip fields and the ground round the edges of the oat stubbles, say, for a hundred yards about. It might be wooded burn sides, or deep feg or heather, and, perhaps, whins and broom. The birds took a lot of finding. Of course, we got other stuff, meanwhile, on the way; and the covey once found, and flushed again and again in neaps, brackens, heather, or what not, the dogs kept pegging them until the covey was pretty well cleared up. Sometimes a covey would utterly beat us by settling into heavy patches of gorse that the dogs would not face – at any rate, not work properly; and as to walking them up with a retriever, they would run about, but knew better than to flush.

After that very naturally we went down every October until the end of the lease, and the last season we had 190 brace of partridges alone.

When hunting near the moor edges we often got a few grouse that were down to the stubble; and in these delightful mixed bags over dogs, how a couple of brace of fine grouse were appreciated.

These mixed bags in the crisp October air, the walking, the variety of sport, though not the quantity, beat the August shooting for enjoyment of sport. You would not know what the dog's point might mean; it might in some ground be hare, snipe, partridge, or grouse. I have made doubles at hare and snipe. The hares were splendid. You may not believe it, but Fred made a double at hares that weighed 22lb. the brace.

One season I stopped over for an extra day by myself – it would be the 18th of October – on the rough ground, and made the following mixed bag over dogs:

- 4 Grouse, stalked on the plough from behind the dykes.
- 6 Partridges.
- 2 Woodcock (very unusual).
- 4 Snipe.
- 9 Brown hares.
- 2 Golden plover.
- 1 Green plover.

1 Rabbit.

—

29 Head.

Grouse, when they get on the plough, are sometimes very stupid, in the above case I stalked the four birds, there were but four; I shot one on the ground, did not show myself, let the bird lie; the others then just fluttered up and flew fifty yards; and down within reach of the dyke, got another, then the other two again fluttered up and down again, that time I jumped up and showed myself and got the pair right and left as they rose.

Season 1869

Black said that we might go down in August and stretch our legs, and kill a few grouse on the rough ground, so down we went, and made about sixty brace of grouse and a lot of sundries, especially golden plover. Of these there were quantities, and in ordinary August months we were far too busy with grouse to heed them.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.