

# FOREST AND STREAM.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF THE ROD AND GUN.

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## THE SHUT-IN SPORTSMAN.

OF all who are kept indoors by bodily infirmity one might naturally think the confinement would be most irksome to him whose recreations are entirely of the outdoor world; yet actual observation does not furnish proof that he bears the privation with less fortitude than fellow mortals of different proclivities.

What substitute can he find inside four close walls for the exhilaration of the sports of woodland and water? What, compared with those the scholar finds in his books, the artist in his pictures, the romancer in his dreams, or the poet in his fancies? Even the man without these resources may at least stolidly endure, one would think. But strangely enough he who loses least chafes most.

The sportsman has the memory of past pleasures to comfort him, and if he be of the sort who enjoy most keenly, he has imagination and invention to call to his aid.

His well and long used gun, companion of many a day of supreme happiness, brings back vivid recollections of many of them.

Not the least of these was the day when the delicate penciling of the browned barrel was untarnished, the polished stock unmarred by dent or scratch, and the whole shining masterpiece of the gunsmith's art was redolent of the faint oily smell that only the gun diffuses. How proud he was to be its owner, to feel its perfect fit and balance, and to have such faith in his ability to hit his bird every time with such a weapon. He smiles now as he recalls how effectually the overweening conceit was taken out of him. For all that humiliation the unforgettably day was full of happiness.

The softly sighing July wind brings in at the open window some subtle reminder of the spicy fragrance of pine and hemlock distilled by a September sun, and he sees again the asters shining in the woodland shade, the yellow of fading wood plants, the red glow of huckleberry leaves among the haze of blue fruit, the feeding partridges, unseen till they burst upward with a roar that quite upset his nerves and caused the waste of two charges. Then after reloading from the brand-new spring-top flask, the lever-charger shot pouch, and the wads, homemade from cardboard, all marvels of celerity in their day, the cautious search for the scattered birds, with the firm resolve to keep steady next time at all hazards. His good resolution was presently rewarded, when a bird that sprang up almost in his face was cut down and killed clean by a shot fired at just the right moment, and so glad was he to have regained mastery of himself that the whole scene is so distinctly imprinted on memory he could go directly to the very spot after all the years of change.

Some slight thing in some quite unlike scene, some sound, some smell, recall other happy days of the past, which he lives over again and again. Some befell where the silver channel winds through countless acres of marsh, now when it is all in the sameness of summer green save where the blooming button bush, thronged with nesting redwings, adorns it with its profusion of white blossoms; now when a tinge of yellow pervades it, varied with splashes of russet, orange and red, and the tangled copses of button bush are islands of green, with here and there a flame of water maple burning like a beacon, and all a-whirl about the passing boat, thick as bees around a hive, and a renewed uproar of thundering wings at the rounding of each bend; or in winter, when the broad level of marsh and water was a white, silent plain, to the eye, lifeless and deserted, though there was a stir of busy inhabitants under the snow-covered thatch of the muskrat houses. Faint and far comes the echo of a hound's voice, and following its direction two dark specks were seen apparently creeping nearer, their speed increasing as they grew and took on

the forms of fox and dog, and the heart beat fast to the swelling music, till at last came the opportunity and the shot, and triumph of success. His nerves thrill again at the memory of it all, and he is glad to have lived in those days, and to remember them.

The boys, who are in the first enthusiasm of sportsmanship, are wild with envy when he tells them of the game there was in all the woodland and marsh when he was a boy, and of the great fish that crowded the waters. As they bewail the fate that brought them into the world so late, he is reminded how he did the same when the old men told him like tales of the big game of their younger days, all gone before his time, and he, too, is a boy—not valuing present blessings, but wishing the past returned or the future reached wherein were all possibilities. Yes, a boy again, with his flintlock musket; and proud of the battered weapon, though it had tricks of sometimes missing fire and flashing in the pan, and always kicked, due to its being breech burnt—so it was said. Though both eyes were shut, he always knew when it went off. When his young visitors tell of a piece of old woodland sacrificed, of some ledge shorn of its trees, of river banks wantonly stripped of shade, he is glad that he cannot see the devastated scenes—it is better to dream of them as he knew them than to awaken to their spoiled reality and the pain of impotent rage against the spoilers.

Can that be only the slow stir of wind-swayed boughs, so like the changing murmur of the swift river fretting on its gravelly bed? So like it that he can fancy himself stealing along the bank behind the fringe of willows, rod in hand, of a fine June morning. The lush intervale grass is dotted with the first buttercups, and the fragrance of wild grape blossoms is in the air; a muskrat swims out from the shore towing a green branch to his burrow; a green heron flaps awkwardly from perch to perch; under a drooping willow a bass snaps a drowning fly with a swirl of the green water, inviting the angler's cast. He is no longer a prisoner of the sick room, but is fishing again in his favorite stream.

So in autumn, when the falling leaves scurry past his window, in spirit he is out in the brown woods, his nostrils almost catching the subtle, indescribable aroma of ripe leaves.

He hears the wood folk stir, the rustle of their feet, their various voices speaking concerning his intrusion, and he hears those weird mysterious voices of the woods that come from no living thing. In the old, old days, when the world was young and people were not so unbelieving, but took their fancies in good faith, these were the voices of wood nymphs and fairies conversing and calling one to another, not the piping of the wind and the chafing of boughs.

The swish of the first snowflakes against the window, a glimpse of snow-covered roofs, bring him visions of the winter woods, muffled and carpeted in white, wherein is written the latest doings of the wood folk, where a fox had made a stealthy scout. Here is recorded what might be taken as the story of the midnight, snowshoe sports of half a dozen of their kind if the tragic finis were not printed in blood and Reynard's fatal leap imprinted on the snow, where there was an end to all the broad pad marks. The partridge has set down in the neatest footprint her devious wandering from her last roosting place to the concluding wing-marks where she took flight upward to a breakfast of buds in a tall poplar. Squirrels have linked so many trees and caches of nuts together; so many woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees are seen, that one wonders how woods so populous can be so silent, though snow-muffled and echoless. Nothing is heard but a party of jays clamoring over their latest discovery.

Such clues lead the imprisoned sportsman to the freedom of outdoors.

But there is a key that opens the door to a far wider range, with comrades who take him to the furthest corner of the wide world. One leads him among the familiar scenes of his youth. Another, into the pathless gloom of Northern forests, the home of the moose and caribou, or further to the frozen haunts of the musk-ox, or to the wild Northwest, where only can be seen the last remnant of the wood buffalo, and to Alaska and the Klondike. Another takes him to the Rockies and shows him the elk in wonderful herds, the antelope, the wild sheep, like statues carved out of the rocks whereon they stand, or points out to him white specks moving along the giddy

craggs, which, he tells him, are wild goats. Another shows him the savage grizzly, king of American beasts. At night by the camp-fire he listens to the wail of the panther, the long howl of the wolf, and sleeps the restful sleep of the just. These most genial companions hunt tigers with him in India, elephants and lions in Africa, shoot foxes in New England, ride after them to the hounds in Virginia, catch tarpon in Floridian waters, salmon in Canadian rivers—in short, share with him all his old sports and initiate him into new ones, and do all that brethren of the gun and rod can for one another, for these kind friends who lighten his burden of weariness and pain are the world-wide contributors to the columns of FOREST AND STREAM.

## JOHN GOMEZ.

OLD John Gomez, the centenarian of Panther Key, off the Gulf Coast of Florida, has passed away. His extraordinary life span of 119 years has closed. Death has found him out at last.

Born in 1781, this man was older than the United States of America. He had almost attained his majority in 1800, and one can but indulge the idle reflection that if to his one hundred and nineteen years but a paltry half year could have been added, so passing beyond 1900, he would have had part in three centuries.

For a long time John Gomez has been a character familiar to FOREST AND STREAM readers. One and another of our correspondents have visited him in his home on Panther Key and made report of his continued health and vigor, at which the world marveled. It was only a few months ago that Tarpon sent a grateful contradiction of a rumor of the old man's death. Of the truth of this new report, however, there can be no question. Of the Panther Key phenomenon of longevity we may now speak in the past tense only—John Gomez was.

Gomez was a native of Portugal. From his native land he went in youth to France, where, as he was fond of telling, he saw Napoleon Bonaparte reviewing his troops. Coming to America as cabin boy on a bark, he deserted ship at Charleston, S. C., and made his way to St. Augustine, then under Spanish rule. Thence he passed to Central America, after many years returning to Florida and taking part in the Seminole War. In the 60's he served as pilot for the Navy in blockading operations in Gulf waters. We reprint from one of our 1896 issues some interesting reminiscences of John Gomez in those days from the pen of Capt. Charles H. Rockwell, who is now in command of Admiral Schley's flagship.

The portrait given on the following page is from a photograph made by Tarpon a few years ago.

## SNAP SHOTS.

Here is a sporting itinerary with which one may contrast his own month off for a hurried trip to the Rockies or Canada in quest of trophies. It is the record of an expedition undertaken by Count Scheibler, an Italian sportsman, whose enterprise was of a method and magnitude making it worthy of record. Coming first to the United States, Count Scheibler hunted grizzlies and elk in the Rocky Mountains; then he went to British Columbia and secured mountain goat specimens. From San Francisco he sailed for India, in which country he secured tiger, rhinoceros, gnu, wild buffalo and other big game. Then he hunted Gya and Ceylon and thence crossed to Africa and did the game of Somaliland, and afterward penetrated equatorial Africa, adding trophy after trophy representing the wonderful store of game in that country. From Africa he passed to Russia for elk. The experience covered seven years, in which time the Count acquired specimens of a large proportion of the big game of four continents.

Mr. Joseph B. Thompson, of the New York Bar, concludes to-day his consideration of the Lacey bill in a paper which is much wider in scope than the title as an exposition of the principles governing game protection. His lucid presentation of these principles deserves careful reading.

It is one of the important missions of FOREST AND STREAM to discover and proclaim new fields for rod and gun. The very complete description of Mexican tarpon fishing will inevitably be the means of directing American anglers to those well stocked waters.

## The Sportsman Tourist.

### Death of John Gomez.

TARPON SPRINGS, Fla., July 23.—*Editor Forest and Stream:* News comes of the death of John Gomez, the veteran of Panther Key. He was found dead near Four Brothers Island on Friday, July 13. He had gone out Thursday fishing, and it is supposed that he fell out of his boat and was drowned. His age is reported at 122 years, but this is an error, for old John always said that he had been born in 1781, so that at the time of his death he was 119.

TARPON.

From *Forest and Stream*, Sept. 13, 1906.

I have recently seen mention in your paper of John Gomez, a citizen of the world, and more especially of the west coast of Florida. Long years ago, say in the summer of 1863 (that seems a long time, does it not?), I became the proprietor of John Gomez. The Commander-in-Chief of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron (there was war in those days) selected me for the command of the U. S. schooner *Two Sisters*, familiarly called the *Two Shysters*. The lofty vessel was a Baltimore pungy of about 40 tons, drawing about 9 feet of water aft and 4 feet forward, as some suggested, so that she could climb hills like a kangaroo. She carried under my command one 12-pounder howitzer, and was manned by twelve seamen, three petty officers, one master's mate and a pilot. When I proceeded on board to take charge of this my first command in the Government service, I found sitting on deck, smoking silently and diligently, his knees near his chin, his back rounded like a bicycle scorch, his old straw hat covering his head from the nape of the neck to his eyebrows, John Gomez, Pilot, U. S. Navy—a man swarthy, silent, and looking like an Indian, but when once opened up, like an oyster, with considerable meat in him. John was my property actually for about six months, incidentally until the war closed. He ate and drank with me, and slept, when he did sleep, somewhere near at hand. He knew a good many things not generally known, and when he chose to talk he could be very interesting. The duty on which I was employed was of great interest, and frequently very exciting—that of the inshore, shoal water cruising, and blockade of the west coast of Florida. Gomez was in his way a perfect pilot. I think he knew familiarly every shoal, rock, oyster bed, creek, inlet, mud bank, fishing ledge, roosting place for birds, deer track and channel from Key West to Pensacola. It is my impression that most of our living came from his directions about where to find fish, game, shellfish, etc., and it was a most fascinating species of yachting and hunting combined, where the game was primarily blockade runners and men generally, and secondarily everything edible that waved a wing or wiggled a fin.

John came originally from Central America—Honduras, as I remember now—or had lived there many years. His age was apparently between forty and seventy. Over that range of thirty years you could guess at will. There were no fences on the range. After he had warmed up so as to talk, he related strange stories. He had lived many years in Florida, had an intimate knowledge of the Everglades, and an acquaintance with the Indians resident there. He had apparently made his headquarters at or about Tampa. When the war broke out he was thereabouts, but a time soon came when he found it convenient to cross the line, and also not to be slow about it. So he "took to the bush," and found rest for his wandering feet at Key West. It will be almost impossible for me to reproduce his picturesque language, but, as far as I can, I will tell the story in John's own words. It seems that John had a family in Tampa. I do not know whether it was his own family or one that he had adopted, but it seems that one day a troubadour, returning for a brief season from the wars, had or fancied he had some rights in the case, so he attempted to enter the precincts of the homestead occupied by Mr. Gomez and the family aforesaid. John said, in telling the story:

"I yere talk in town, that man Willums come back. He say he kill me. One day I see Willums come 'long the road. I take my gun. I say, 'Willums, I no wanta you come in here.' He say, 'I come in. I killa you.' I say, 'Willums, don'ta you come in da gate.' Willums, he come in da gate, I shoota him, an' he staya there. I come 'way."

That seemed to me to be good and sufficient cause for John's hegira, and later his family joined him in Key West. He found employment as pilot on Government ships, but he did not like to serve on the steamers or larger ships. Once when employed on one of the fast steamers running up the coast for Tampa, close inshore, the night being very dark, John did not make out how to go slower, as he desired to do, and unaware that he should tell his fears to the officer of the deck, he wandered about until he found the engine room, and said to the engineer on watch: "Mista Engineer, don'ta b'ily your water too hot!" which was his idea of going slower. To tell of the fish we caught and the game we shot under John's direction and guidance would be "another story." He was a new and unique type to us. He was a compound of Spaniard, Indian, hunter and fisherman all in one. He carried, somewhere about him, a flint and steel and a horn full of tinder, and produced fire from it to light his pipe. He was always perfectly clean and neat, but his clothing was tropical and free; I do not think he liked to wear shoes. Squatted on deck with his old pipe was his usual posture. His language was calm and slow; I rarely saw him vehement. But there was a secret, slumbering force about the man which savored of helpfulness and power, and I have rarely met a man whom I would tie to, for outing or danger, ashore or afloat, with more confidence than I would to John Gomez.

He told me a story once about a deer hunting expedition of his in the Everglades below Punta Rassa which has left a picture in my mind which will never leave it. He was trying to creep up to a spot where he had seen a deer. He was standing for an instant in a flat place, peering cautiously through the bushes in search of his game, when he felt something strike him gently on the inside of each leg. He cautiously looked down, moving as little as possible, and saw an enormous rattlesnake be-

tween his feet, head erect and ready to strike if he moved an inch. He was forced to stand immovable until the snake lowered its head and uncoiled its length, when a great leap took him clear of its attack. At this moment he heard a low laugh and saw an Indian in a tree, who had been an amused spectator of the scene. The rigid John, the wrathful snake and the chuckling Indian would make a picture if they could be painted or drawn. That would have been the chance of a lifetime for the camera fiend.

The last time I was in Key West I inquired for John Gomez, but could not learn his whereabouts. I am glad he is still alive. All true sportsmen would fully appreciate this son of nature. At first sight he would be passed by, but if once one could penetrate beneath the bark there was the rich yield of a life of adventure to gather sap from. The species is fast dying out. Soon there will



JOHN GOMEZ.

be no more. Pioneer, hunter, sailor, fisherman, all in one, the school is closed that made them, the books are out of date from which they were taught, and the railroad shrieks where they hunted, and the bicycle whirrs where once the deer paths ran. Good-by, old John; we shall cruise together no more, unless there are happy hunting grounds and smooth seas where we are both bound.

C. H. ROCKWELL, Commander U. S. N.

### In a Nova Scotia Camp.

BY EDWARD A. SAMUELS.

IN my many outings with rod and gun it has been my great privilege to meet with a large number of sportsmen who were more than ordinarily interesting and companionable. Enthusiasts as they were, they were full of reminiscences, and many a thrilling story of the chase have I listened to by the camp-fire or in the hunting lodge in the wilderness. What a volume those narratives would make if I had been able to record them; but most of them have passed away from me and they cannot be recalled. There is one, however, which I heard in camp with a number of sportsmen not long ago which I will endeavor to put on paper. It was told by one of our party and I will present it here as nearly as possible in the narrator's own words.

The Doctor and I have been close friends for many years [referring to a well-known physician of Boston]. Our tastes are entirely congenial and both of us are enthusiasts in field sports. Every season has found us together on a Canadian salmon stream or in the forests of the North in pursuit of the moose or other large game or upon the shores and marshes of the sea coast where the bay birds and water fowl are wont to congregate. It was during one of these outings—a trip to the wilds of Nova Scotia—that the moose hunt I am going to tell you about occurred.

We had reached the section of country in which we proposed to hunt after a journey which occupied several days. It was made chiefly in our canoes and the route was through a chain of forest lakes which for picturesque beauty could hardly be excelled. The last of the lakes was reached by a portage of about two miles in length, and at its upper end, between two rivers, we made our camp. The locality selected was a wooded point which jutted out a dozen or more rods into the lake.

"It's just the spot," said John Freeman, our guide, "for the breeze will carry our smoke and camp noises out from the shore, and ag'in we're clost between two rivers and we can paddle up either of them for a couple of miles into the best moose kentry in these parts."

It was an ideal spot for a tenting place, the view extending the whole length of the lovely lake, which lay so placidly in the heart of the wilderness. "Ah, this is solid comfort!" exclaimed the Doctor as he lighted his after-supper pipe and stretched himself before the rousing fire of hardwood logs. "We are a good many miles from civilization, but we lack nothing to complete our enjoyment."

"Yes," I assented, "the old savage nature is cropping

out again and showing itself plainly in the pleasure we are deriving from this wild life."

"I don't think there's anything savage about it," said John, lighting his pipe with a brand from the fire. "Lor' bless yer' everyone likes to git out in the woods on a moose hunt; it's a sort of nat'ral desire."

"Yes," I replied, "a desire that we inherit from our remote savage ancestors."

"You're speaking of savages," replied the guide, "and of course you mean Injuns. Now I don't acknowledge that any of my ancestors was one—not by a jugful. All the Injuns I ever saw was too 'way down for a decent man to own kinship to. I never saw but one of 'em that had a conscience, and I don't actually know if he had one. You remember on the carry yesterday we passed an old Injun named Jim Joseph? He once got in a drunken row with a white man and accidentally, most folks think, struck him a blow that killed him. Nothing was done about it, but the old feller has been a changed man since the accident. At times his mind is all right, but generally he is a little off. Some think that the murder weighs on his mind. If old Jim has such a thing as a conscience he is sufferin' from it all right. He likes his whisky all the same, and sometimes gits too much of it."

Those of us who have had much experience with guides know how varied are their characteristics and dispositions. Some are industrious and are constantly doing something about the camp to enhance the comfort of their employers. Others are the reverse and are sometimes lazy to a most exasperating degree. There are sulky guides, cheerful and always singing or whistling guides, jealous guides, honest guides and lying, thieving guides. I have had my outings with them all, and long experience has taught me gratefully to enjoy the virtues which appear and bear philosophically the vices that are almost certain sooner or later to crop out. John was what might be termed a reminiscent guide, and he entertained us for an hour or two with his odd stories and quaint sayings.

"I consider the Injun a putty 'way down kind of critter," he repeated, seating himself and pulling away at his somewhat refractory pipe. "I allers agree with the chap who said that the only good Injun is a dead Injun. I've had lots to do with 'em and allers found 'em as treacherous as snakes. I allers make it a point to keep 'em at a distance from me."

"I think you are too sweeping in your condemnation," said the Doctor quietly. "I have had Indians out with me who were perfectly honest and who were most reliable guides."

"That may be," replied the guide. "It was for their interest to be all right with you; but I never see one that was wuth a string of suckers. I believe in keeping 'em down to their proper place."

"Well, John," said I as he paused to cut up a fresh supply of tobacco, "they're pretty well kept down here in Nova Scotia; there are only a few left, and you ought not to treat them too harshly. Remember, it's not a fair thing to strike a man when he is down."

"That's right, too," he responded; "sock yer boot into him."

"You are perfectly incorrigible, John," exclaimed the Doctor, laughing at the unique idea of fairness that had been expressed.

"Yes, they're a hard lot," continued the guide; "and they treat their best friends mean. Why, there was old Squire Thompson down country, years ago; as good-hearted an old feller as ever lived. He was too good to the Injuns and allers was giving to them whea they came around. But Lor', it made no diff'rence; they stole his sheep right and left and even spared Capt. Bents, his neighbor, a man who was too mean to live. Oh, yes; he was a reg'lar vulgar critter; an out-and-outer."

"What on earth do you mean, John?" asked the Doctor.

"Oh, he was always preachin' economy. I've got no use for such people. Yes, he was an ornery cuss. He was a widower, and they say his wife died from his meanness. He took a notion to git married ag'in, and began coortin' a young girl in the settlement. By jingo, he spruced up and tried to look young ag'in. He shaved off his beard and mustache and he was the homeliest lookin' object, for all the world like the grace of God in pursuit of murder." (As will be seen, John's metaphors were often somewhat vague.)

"That mustache," he continued, "had hid the biggest mouth in the country, for I believe if he had wanted to he could have swallowed a 14-pound codfish and never gasped. But the joke of it is the girl married him. Yes, she drove her pigs to a mighty poor market. The idea of marryin' that old feller with seven or eight young ones!"

"Well, the Injuns never touched any of his stock, but stole from old Squire Thompson every chance they got. Yes, the old Squire was a big-hearted man and he loved good whisky; allers took his three good glasses between supper and bed. No, I wasn't fur behind him, neither."

John's hand at this juncture was passed across his mouth as if the memory of the three glasses came back most vividly.

"Yes, the old Squire was a widower too," continued the guide. "He lost his wife in their early married life, and he said sometimes that he thought a life of celibacy had not been altogether in his favor."

"Celibacy," John, I suggested.

"It's all one," he replied nonchalantly. "He was reconciled, however, to such a life and allers said that it was well to remember that the shorn lamb is tempered to the blast."

"You are mixed in your quotation," said the Doctor, who was listening in great amusement to John's narrative.

"May be," he replied; "but you know what he meant. Yes, the old Squire was a great sleeper. Gad! He'd sleep the legs off an iron pot; but when he was awake he was alive and mighty interestin'. I can tell ye; far and away ahead of Capt. Bent, who couldn't see a hole in a ladder so far as intellectual thought was concerned. Yes, the old Squire used to say when he felt lonesome that celibacy wasn't the best thing in life, and he often topped off with the idee that these light afflictions sometimes assume a dark disguise."

"The old Squire must have been a very interesting man," observed the Doctor when John has finished his somewhat incoherent account.