

**PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR  
ACQUIRING THE ART OF  
SHOOTING ON THE WING**

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Plain Directions for Acquiring the Art of Shooting on the Wing by Anonymous

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**ANONYMOUS**

**PLAIN DIRECTIONS FOR  
ACQUIRING THE ART OF  
SHOOTING ON THE WING**





THE WOUNDED SNIPE.

# PLAIN DIRECTIONS

FOR ACQUIRING THE ART OF

## SHOOTING ON THE WING.

WITH USEFUL HINTS CONCERNING ALL THAT RELATES  
TO GUNS AND SHOOTING, AND PARTICULARLY  
IN REGARD TO THE ART OF

LOADING SO AS TO KILL.

*TO WHICH HAS BEEN ADDED SEVERAL VALUABLE AND  
HITHERTO SECRET RECIPES, OF GREAT PRACTICAL  
IMPORTANCE TO THE SPORTSMAN.*

BY  
AN OLD GAMEKEEPER.



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THE INDUSTRIAL PUBLICATION COMPANY,  
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1873.

SK. 29  
P69

## PREFACE.

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THE fact that he who would preserve "a sound mind in a healthy body" must devote some time to the sports of the field, has now become very generally recognized: so much so, indeed, that "muscular Christianity" now commands the respect of the community; and boating, skating, riding, fishing, and shooting are no longer regarded as the occupations of those alone who are unable or unwilling to engage in what some are pleased to term more useful employments. It is not many years since the general feeling in this country was so opposed to the practice of shooting, except perhaps by boys or pioneers, that for a business man to be seen with a gun in his hand and a pointer at his heels, was to be ostracised by all so-called respectable persons. Fortunately, that day has gone by. Very many of our most estimable citizens, and not a few of our most able and worthy divines, enjoy the gun and the rod with a zest that proves that the highest civilization is not incompatible with the enjoyment of field sports. Such a state of things has long prevailed among our cousins on the other side of the water, where the gentleman that is unable to ride across country or bring down his partridge or pheasant as it tops the stubble or the copse, is looked upon with a feeling akin to pity. Sir Walter Scott, whose knowledge of human nature has been seldom equalled and never surpassed, tells us that in his day most English gentlemen of less than twenty years old, would feel an imputation on their horsemanship more keenly than they would one on their moral character; and few men, who were familiar with the state of society in Scott's day, will doubt the assertion. As a consequence of this feeling, every young lad whose circumstances warranted it, was taught to hunt, shoot, and fish, as regularly as he was taught to read and write. Nor was this part of his education left to such chance instruction as he could pick up among his companions, as is unfortunately the case with us. Instruction in horsemanship

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ship was obtained regularly, either from a riding-master or from the groom, and part of the duties of every gamekeeper consisted in teaching the rising generation how to shoot. As a consequence, the young gentlemen of Great Britain not only became familiar with these things from their boyhood, but they learned them in such a thorough and scientific manner that they not only acquired great skill but passed through this period of their curriculum without serious danger to themselves or others. In this country we have no gamekeepers, and few grooms; and our young men are, in almost every instance, self-taught so far as all that relates to the use of the gun is concerned. More than this, the most dangerous and foolish course is in general pursued toward the lad who shows an inclination to use the gun, particularly if his guardian be not himself a sportsman. When a boy first asks permission to use a gun, it will be found that most old women (whether they wear petticoats or not) forbid the use of what they consider such a dangerous weapon, but are willing that he should have a *pistol*,—which is a far more dangerous plaything, both for the boy himself and for those who are about him. The long barrel of a gun is not readily pointed either in the direction of ourselves or others, without our knowing it; while the shorter pistol frequently comes into dangerous range either of the person who holds it or of others, without being immediately perceived. Moreover, a boy in such circumstances receives no proper instruction in the handling, loading, carrying, and discharging of a gun, when by his own stealth or the carelessness of his guardians he comes into possession of one. Those rules which, from long habit, have become second nature to all good sportsmen, are unknown to him, and of course unacted upon. He carries his gun with the hammers on the caps, and with the muzzle pointing downward or horizontally toward every point of the compass. He pokes the muzzle through any fence he may have to cross, gets through or over himself as best he can, and then drags the gun after him, frequently receiving the contents of one of the barrels while so doing. In short, his gun, instead of being an instrument of honest recreation, becomes the source of stolen speers, and is sooner or later a cause of serious accident. Sensible guardians ought to abandon all this. If a young man shows an inclination for the sports of the field, let them see that he is provided with a safe and efficient weapon, and carefully instructed in its use. Youth must have recreation, and it is better for a young man that he should devote his days to the green fields than his nights to the green table.



When field sports are recommended to the sedentary for exercise, we often hear ultra utilitarians inquire why wood-sawing, digging, and other useful employments, are not quite as good a means of exercise as shooting, fishing, riding, etc. The answer is obvious enough, though perhaps not always appreciated by the narrow-minded ignorance that characterizes the group to which such persons belong. Physiologists know well enough that the evils which arise from sedentary employments are caused in a great measure by the unequal strain that is placed on one set of powers. The mind is kept in a state of high tension, while the physical man is allowed to relax to the utmost. Now, if we would remedy this state of things, it is evident that the mind must be relieved by being diverted from the subjects that have previously engrossed it. This can not be done by such purely mechanical operations as digging, sawing, etc. If a mathematician should resort to digging for exercise, the chances are ten to one that while his hands and feet were engaged in physical exercise, his brain would be intensely occupied with problems in the higher calculus. If, however, he should take a gun, and wander through the woods and fields in search of game, his attention would be constantly occupied, and the strain upon his nervous system would be relieved.

Shooting is an art that any active young man with good eyes and nimble fingers may soon learn, provided he sets the right way to work. Of course, if instruction can be obtained from some experienced and intelligent sportsman, it will be better than any amount of reading. It unfortunately happens, however, that many very excellent shots are utterly unable to give the tyro anything like proper instruction; they can kill their own birds, but they can not instruct their young friends how to do it. Beside this, many young men who own guns and are extremely fond of using them, have no one who is competent to instruct them. They therefore confine themselves to sitting shots, or easy flights; they hunt squirrels, shoot pigeons off the tree, single ducks off the water, and are even guilty of stalking the covey of partridge and pouring in the death-dealing shower when the poor birds are huddled together. Such gunners never feel the joy which thrills through the nerves of every sportsman as he brings down the strong-winged mallard as he clears the rushes, or stops the woodcock as with ringing flight he darts through the copse, or tumbles over the wild pigeon in its most rapid flight, or cuts down the sharp-flying quail as he rises on whirring wing, or the snipe as he turns and dodges. Merely to

kill birds is the work of the butcher; with the sportsman, killing may be the end of his work, but that from which the chief joy arises is the skillful and successful search, in which reason is pitted against instinct, and then the deft and scientific shot which illustrates at once our skill and our knowledge. To show the young sportsman how to obtain the skill that will enable him to bring down his game cleverly and cleanly, after he has found it skillfully, is the chief object of the writer. We have, therefore, confined ourselves strictly to the art of shooting, and have not attempted to give directions for finding game, breaking dogs, or retrieving. Perhaps, if the present attempt should receive the favor of the young devotees of the gun, we may, in a future volume of similar size, condense the most important points relating to these matters.

When compared with many of the larger and more expensive works now before the public, it may seem that the present volume is rather a small one; but we believe that it contains nearly everything of any consequence that relates to the practice of the art. Most of the books on sporting are made large in order that the authors and publishers may reap a greater profit, and to this end the bulk is increased by endless discussions in regard to the history of sporting, from the days of Nimrod down. They can not tell us how to choose our powder without giving an account of Schwartz, Bacon, and others, to which is generally added a disquisition on the composition and mode of manufacture of powder, all which is better adapted to the use of the superintendent of a powder-mill than of a sportsman. By leaving out all this irrelevant matter, we have saved a great deal of room.

Within the last ten years breech-loaders have been brought to such a degree of perfection that they promise to supersede entirely the old muzzle-loader. Although we own several first-class muzzle-loaders we seldom use them, preferring the breech-loader altogether. This makes little difference, however, so far as the young sportsman is concerned: the same rules that apply to the one apply to the other, and he who can successfully use a muzzle-loader will find no difficulty in managing a breech-loader.

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