

FOREST AND STREAM.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF THE ROD AND GUN.

TERMS, \$4 A YEAR, 10 CTS. A COPY, }
SIX MONTHS, \$2. }

NEW YORK, JUNE 23, 1892.

{ VOL. XXXVIII.—No. 25.
{ NO. 318 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

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THE DECLINE OF CREEDMOOR.

THE action, noted in another column, of the National Rifle Association in abandoning Creedmoor, is a move which has been forced upon it by the short-sighted policy of the militia authorities of the State. Apart from the rank ingratitude of thus ousting the N. R. A. from its range at Creedmoor, the move is one of the silliest of which even the newest of gold-laced subalterns could have been guilty.

Early in the seventies a few men noted the absurdity of a guard with guns but no shooting skill. Some were in the National Guard, others were not. Wingate, Hawley, Gildersleeve, Fulton, Yale, Hepburn, were among those who at the start recognized the deficiency and set about its remedy. They did it by the organization of the National Rifle Association. Everything was new and untried. The Regular Army had no provision whatever for rifle practice; the militia were even worse off. The programmes from Wimbledon were something of a guidance, and the most rudimentary details were gone over with patient precision by men who really knew very little more of the art than the tyros they were instructing. The press, daily and weekly, encouraged the movement, the more advanced of the militiamen took hold of it with vim, and then the international matches and the luck of winning them gave the whole scheme tremendous impetus. It settled back into a routine matter, but it did not die. When the regiments had taken up rifle practice under the tutelage of graduates, so to speak, of the National Rifle Association, the parent body drew back and watched the growth, not only in this but in other States, and saw too the somewhat haughty regulars compelled to follow the excellent example set them by the militia shots.

Now comes a latter day generation of managers, who are too self-satisfied and too heedless to read up a bit in the history of the movement. They are given authority and must show it and proceed to do so with a senseless disregard of the proprieties of the situation. What are the latest facts? The New York State and National Guard, and particularly those in New York and Brooklyn, have set days for practice. Many of them can not, or at any rate do not, go down. The wiser heads of the N. R. A. saw this difficulty and put in practice a measure of relief. It was to be put on matches at convenient dates during the shooting season. These matches were at the regulation official distance and being fired over by guardsmen with the State arm, the scores carefully taken and authenticated were placed on the State record to the credit of the men. The men paid their own fares, bought ammunition, paid entrance fees in the matches, had all the excitement and rivalry of any match, won prizes, and left a modest surplus in the hands of the National Rifle Association, which surplus was expended to the last cent in carrying on the annual fall meeting at Creedmoor and defraying the other very limited expenses of the Association. There have been for several

years past no other sources of income. The result of all this opportunity for practice was that the regiments, and particularly some of them having energy and zeal, made remarkably fine showing in the art of rifle shooting. Then went up a plaint from the more shiftless guardsmen that those having time and money could go down and qualify to the seeming detriment of others. This cry seems to have struck a listening ear in the new State Inspector General of Rifle Practice, and the process of leveling downward was entered upon. The N. R. A. matches were cut off. The regular order days for parade under uniform were kept on and certain free days for voluntary practice scattered through the year. What the N. R. A. did well, guided by an intelligent experience, the State will struggle with and show results not at all proportionate to the outlay. There will be expense to the State and no corresponding gain to the guard. The shiftless regiment will find they cannot drag the competent guardsmen down, and the comparative showing of inefficiency will still remain. The only positive result will be, or rather it has been, the driving out into an itinerant existence of the N. R. A. This year it is to have its challenge periodical match shot at Sea Girt through the shrewd courtesy of the New Jersey Guardsmen. The great Empire State has taken a step backward; but one very small man, trying to fill out to the dimensions of a "General," has thought it clever to issue a very absurd set of orders on an important part of the duties of the militia.

Discipline prevents members of the guard from expressing their opinions. The directors of the N. R. A. have too much respect for their own dignity and the distance to their adversary to stoop low enough to meet him on his own level. But the public at large who know the facts will not hesitate to say that some one has blundered, and that the blunder is a well blended mixture of idiocy and malice.

REARING FISH FOR DISTRIBUTION.

ABSTRACTS of three articles on the best method of stocking waters are published in continuation of our series of papers read at the last meeting of the American Fisheries Society. The subject is now considered one of the most important in the range of fishcultural operations. The various arguments in favor of fry planting or the introduction of yearlings are pretty fully and clearly brought forward in the articles of Messrs. Clark, Mather and Nevins, together with the subsequent discussion.

Mr. Clark fed 250,000 fry upon liver chiefly, and at the age of one year they had cost a little less than one cent each. He learned by actual experiment that the proportion of yearlings destroyed in confinement with larger fish is very small, while the loss of fry was almost total. The loss of yearlings in transportation also is small, but large numbers of fry die in transit. He remarks that there is never any uncertainty about the number of yearlings planted, because they are easily counted by sender and receiver, but fry cannot readily be numbered. He finds that artificially reared trout will rise to natural bait or the artificial fly as readily as wild trout. Mr. Clark further notes that the planting of fry has not been attended with results commensurate with the outlay involved.

Mr. Nevins and Mr. Herschel Whitaker called attention to the successful planting of many streams in Michigan and Wisconsin by means of fry. Mr. Whitaker also mentioned the increase of salmon in the Penobscot through the introduction of very young fish. In some cases he found that 500 fry were sufficient to stock a stream. Mr. N. K. Fairbank expressed his belief that fry planting has succeeded in Michigan and Wisconsin because the streams are deep; he considered the shallow waters of New York, Pennsylvania and New England not adapted to fry planting. Mr. Mather startled his hearers by producing statistics to show that the food of a yearling fish alone costs 11 cents; but we have corrected his calculation in connection with his article. Commissioner W. H. Bowman admitted that yearlings are better than fry for distribution, but opposed their use on account of the expense of rearing and carrying them. The New York Commission aims to secure the best results which can be obtained for a small outlay.

It was stated by Mr. W. L. Gilbert that the food of 30,000 yearling trout and 5,000lbs. of marketable trout cost him \$400. Mr. W. F. Page, of the U. S. Fish Commission, reared at Neosho, Mo., 35,500 trout to lengths of

from 4 to 10in. at a cost of 8 cents per pound. These were kept in small ponds, 8 by 20ft., supplied with a flow of 200 gallons of water per minute. The ponds were full of natural trout food. Mr. N. K. Fairbank, in discussing this subject, stated that he has at Geneva, Ill., about 25 trout ponds, 100 to 300ft. long and 50 to 75ft. wide. He finds masses of water plants which are full of shrimp, and these alone suffice for the rearing of his fish to the age of yearlings. Fully 50 per cent. of his fry reach yearling age—a greater percentage than by any other mode of feeding. In stocking trout streams vegetation can be introduced on which shrimp will grow and furnish ample food for the trout.

While there is no doubt that good results have been produced in many instances by fry planting, it has been generally agreed by persons who have seriously studied fishculture problems that better returns are assured from the introduction of fingerlings, and this belief is steadily gaining ground everywhere. If yearlings can be reared on artificial food at a cost of one cent each, and by means of natural food their cost can be still further reduced, their well known advantages over fry should determine their selection for stocking the waters.

CONGRESS AND THE NATIONAL PARK.

THE extraordinary neglect by Congress of the needs of the National Park is strongly emphasized anew by the occurrences of this spring. Each year lawless characters on the borders of the reservation come to understand better that neither the troops in charge of the Park, nor the civil authorities of adjoining States, have any power to punish infractions of the regulations, and each year these marauders grow bolder. This spring parties have gone into the Park and caught young buffalo and elk to take away and sell. Two such parties have been captured, all their live stock confiscated and the offenders turned out of the Park. How many others have succeeded in getting away with the wild animals that they had caught, we cannot know. What a farce this pretended protection is. But Congress does not mind a little thing like that.

Meantime the grabbers, those who want the Park for themselves so as to make the public pay them tribute, stand about and lick their chops. It is uncertain to which party the bone will be thrown, or indeed whether it will be thrown at all. The Committee on Public Lands of the House evidently does not know its own mind, and it is even doubtful whether it has a mind.

In favorably reporting a bill for the right of way of the Montana Mineral R. R., the Public Lands Committee recommended that no cut-off be made at the northeast corner of the Park. Now, a few weeks later, with charming frankness and singular complaisance, it stultifies itself by recommending the passage of Senator Warren's bill which provides for this cut-off. It is a prompt right-about-face. The committee evidently desires to please everybody and has no opinions of its own which will stand in the way of doing this. It is prepared to face in any direction on short notice. The committee evidently believes that consistency is no jewel.

What the outcome of it all will be no one can say. After having been guarded for twenty years, the integrity of the Park is most seriously threatened. It is easy to point out who will suffer by the neglect of Congress to give adequate protection to the Park. The people who will feel the effects of this neglect are not the politicians at Washington, nor yet the game thieves of Montana. The public will be the losers; that is to say, you who read these lines and men like you.

SNAP SHOTS.

If experience had not demonstrated that the lawful sale of fish and game in close season promotes the unlawful killing of such fish and game in close season, there would be no valid objection to such a law as that proposed for Massachusetts, permitting the sale of reared trout at a time when wild trout are protected. But experience has demonstrated this very thing. This is the beginning, the middle and the end of sensible discussion of Mr. Gilbert's proposal to open the Massachusetts markets for the traffic in cultivated trout.

Miss Fannie P. Hardy once wrote that the people of Maine would resent the establishment of game preserves in that State. Now here comes Jonathan Darling with a proposal to convert his Nicatowis Lake property into just such an exclusive preserve.