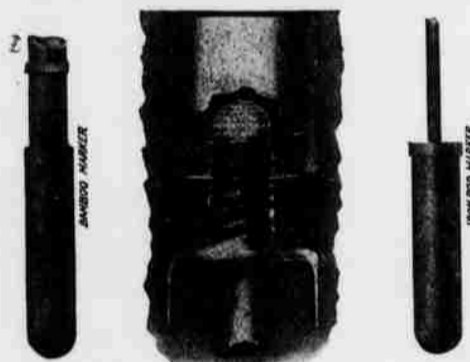


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Saturday, January 22, 1916

**The Wild Turkey**

We have been asked many times about  
the exact truth of several things vaguely  
felt but not definitely ascertained by the  
casual visitor. One is farms. Another  
is about the wild turkey. I have never  
seen a man, unless it was Dr. William  
Hill, who knew definitely about farms.  
But the elusive turkey question has been  
settled hereabout by experts of the first  
water.

There lives on the waters of Drowning  
Creek an old gentleman whose acquaint-  
ance with the wild bird and with the  
barnyard fowl are about equal. He un-  
derstands their domestic habits and pri-  
vate tastes, and can talk their language  
through a reed or even on a piece of  
slate, and has been on familiar terms with  
them all his life. To him I repaired and  
put these questions:

- 1 "Are there any wild turkeys here-  
abouts?"
  - 2 "Can I kill one?"
- He answered readily. "There are."  
"You cannot."

He meant no offense. His vice was  
frankness. A little discussion revealed  
his convictions that with the decline of  
the skilled and patient woodsman the tur-  
key tribes had increased ten fold, and  
with impunity. For of all the inhabitants  
of the forest the old gobbler is the only  
one that is not lulled to a sense of secu-  
rity or dulled into careless habits. He  
is a thoroughbred, and his religion is to  
keep the utmost possible mileage between  
him and the Christian human at all times,  
and without any exception. He is never  
off his guard, and is never mistaken. He  
is all ears and all nose and all legs. He  
has a careful chart of the inaccessible  
and dangerous places of the entire State,  
and in these he camps on the alert, con-  
fident from experience that only one more  
enduring and painstaking than himself  
can ever come up with him, however many  
guns and dogs and turkey squeakers they  
may have.

Here we are in the very heart of the  
Turkey country. But we never kill them,  
except by chance out quail hunting. For  
the living truth is that we do not love the  
woods, and silence, and the still and dis-  
tant place enough to hunt them out. But  
they are killed every week in every dire-

tion by the old settlers, who are almost  
as taciturn and elusive and unseen as the  
birds themselves.

**A MIDNIGHT START**

And really, I do not blame us. My  
last attempt at turkey slaughter rankles  
still in my mind, and is doubtless a monu-  
mental joke to this day in feathered  
gatherings. "Herous," I said, "I will  
dine on wish bone of my own killing,  
with the tang of the woods therein." I  
communicated my desire to one wise to  
the ways of the roost and the range. Not  
long afterwards he turned up one even-  
ing in the Wintertime somewhat after-  
dark and conveyed the alarming informa-  
tion that we should proceed to the sport  
next morning at midnight. By the light  
of pine knots we indulged in coffee and  
biscuits, and then piled the dogs and guns  
and divers other odd instruments worn  
smooth with age, into a buggy, and drove  
out into a cold and distant woods. Ob-  
serve that distance is of no moment to the  
turkey hunter. One mile or twenty, it is  
all he same.

By some subtle method of their own the  
turkey had established themselves a roost  
at the exact spot a mathematician would  
have designated as the *locus* of a point  
equally remote from every habitation  
in the country. Their cunning was  
more diabolical still. They had selected  
a pine tree for this game, one of thirty,  
all exactly alike, thus resorting to the  
ruse for self protection first adopted by  
King Henry the Fourth when he dressed  
all his knights in the same suit of armour  
as he wore himself.

**THE TURKEY'S LITTLE GAME**

Our guide selected the tree, and we  
snuk up on it in various imitations of  
Chingogcook, guns cocked, and eyes  
straining. This at four A. M. Complete  
and monumental silence until six ten. I  
then selected by bird on a limb far above  
me, and waited for the signal to fire. It  
was to be broadside and a massacre. As  
the dim light advanced I perceived I had  
made a slight mistake, and that my bird  
was a pine cone. I hastened to correct  
the error and cover another bird further  
up. The coming daylight revealed this  
also to be an error. The object appeared  
to have bark and not feathers on its crest.  
And just as I was on the point of  
concluding that there were no turkeys at  
all in the world, our pathfinder muttered  
an unseemly word which called attention  
to the fact that three or four hundred  
yards off the whole tribe were descending  
refreshed from another tree, leisurely  
stretching their wings and extending  
their long legs in derision.

**THE SCREECH OF DAWN**

They took one casual look, and then  
set off in unison at a pace calculated to  
discourage pursuit, for parts unknown.

I then considered the hunt finished, and  
said something fatuous about fortunes of  
war, and sportsman's luck.

The hunt, dear friend, had just begun.  
The dogs, crazy with excitement, were  
loosed, and disappeared with incredible  
speed into the forest, barking like all  
possessed. In two minutes they were gone  
utterly, and silence again fell on all the  
world.

I must say that sunrise in the heart of  
the wilderness, contract with the frosty  
morning air, and the feel of the gun, and

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