

Marksmanship.

BY GILBERT GUERDON.



F all our outdoor pastimes, shooting has always been a first favourite. Old and young alike are happy as long as they have something to aim at—something to hit. Let it be pigeons at Hurlingham, bull's-eyes at Bisley, cockshies for cocoa-nuts on the common, or puff-and-dart in the play-room—each in its way has its peculiar charm.

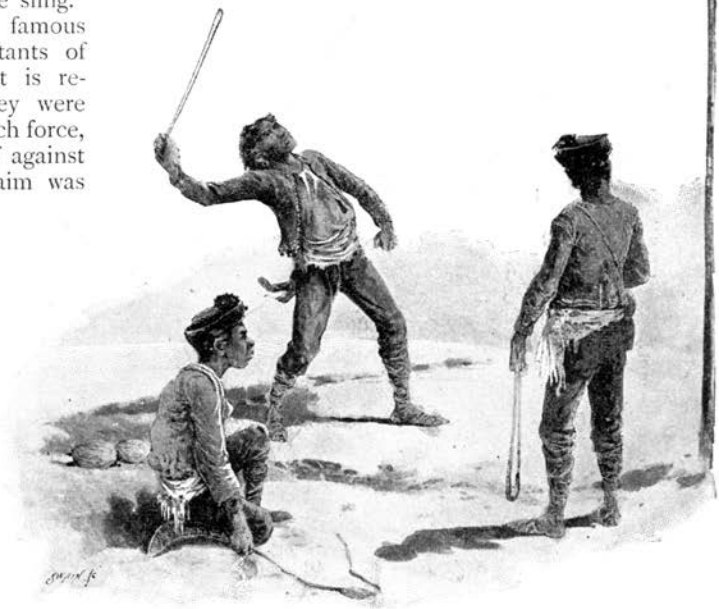
The art of aiming and hitting, sometimes called marksmanship, is natural to mankind, and is "as old as the hills." That was "a decided hit" of the stripling David when he "chose five smooth stones out of the brook," and with one of them, deftly flung from a sling, laid low the giant Philistine, Goliath of Gath. Stone-throwing has been practised by striplings ever since. Though a very primitive weapon of attack, the sling was used by soldiers for many centuries.

Virgil, as versified by Dryden, tells us that "The Tuscan king laid by the lance and took him to the sling."

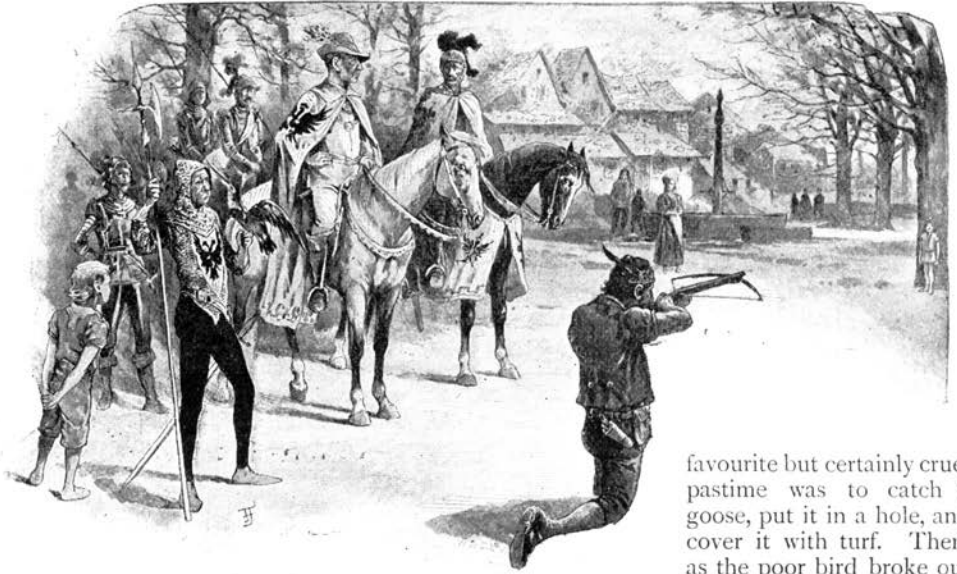
Amongst the most famous slingers were the inhabitants of the Balearic Isles, and it is recorded of them that they were able to sling stones with such force, that no armour was proof against the blows, while their aim was unerring. They usually carried three slings, one tied round the head, another fastened to the girdle, and the third twisted round the right wrist. These world-renowned warriors were ambidextrous, and were quite as skilful with the left hand as they were with the right. This dexterity, or rather ambidexterity, was acquired by every-day practice, even from early childhood; for, while quite

youngsters, they had to sling down their daily bread from the tops of high poles, where their parents put it, and the children only got what they brought down by their accurate slinging.

Archery succeeded slinging, and every young Englishman in the days of Edward III. was the owner of a bow of his own height. Usually it was made of yew. The string was of gut, horse-hair, hemp or silk, and, occasionally, of women's hair plaited or spun. The arrow was exactly half the length of the bow. It was dressed with three



SLINGING FOR A DINNER.



THE FEAT OF WILLIAM TELL.

favourite but certainly cruel pastime was to catch a goose, put it in a hole, and cover it with turf. Then, as the poor bird broke out of its prison, it was shot at till killed.

feathers, two of which were plucked from a gander and the other from a goose. Practice at the butts was constant, and it was considered disgraceful to shoot at less than 220yds. When perfection at that distance had been attained, practice at the popinjay was permitted. A

The longest bow and arrow shoot on record was made by a Lancashire toxophilite, and he in three flights covered a mile, being about 587 yards for each arrow.

Edward III. was an ardent archer, and enjoyed attending the shooting matches.



INDIAN ARCHERS.

It was at a meeting of this kind near Nottingham that three famous archers shot before the King. The marks were two hazel rods set up at twenty-score paces. At the first flight—

Cloudesley with
a bearing arrow
Clave the wand
in two.

The champion archer then called his little boy and tied him to a stake, and placing an apple on his head, turned his face away and bade him stand steady. The confident father then stepped out six-score paces from the stake, and bidding the amazed spectators be silent he drew his bow, and as the old ballad says:—

Then Cloudesley cleft the apple in two,
As many a man might see.
“The gods forbid it,” said the King,
“That you should shoot at me.”

This pleasant little tale reads very like the familiar Swiss legend of William Tell, but both the English and the Swiss versions were current about the same time, and probably both originated in the still older Scandinavian fable of the matchless marksman.

Archery, though now only practised as a pastime in civilized countries, is still in active use amongst the savage tribes of Africa and



AUSTRALIAN BOOMERANG.

India. A favourite amusement with them is to shoot at a target while galloping past it, and the more skilful of them will put three out of four shots in the bull's-eye.

Albert Smith amusingly described the boomerang as “the Australian crooked lath with the out-of-the-way name, that has the singular property when you throw it from you of returning and knocking the thrower's eyes out.” This, of course, only referred to the boomerang when used as a toy at an evening party; but serious injury can be done with it when used as a weapon of offence. It can be thrown with surprising accuracy, and is used for killing both ground game and birds. About half a century ago it afforded amusement to the students at Oxford and Cambridge.

In some respects akin to the use of the boomerang is the stick-throwing of an African negro. In the early days of the Wimbledon Rifle Meetings, Sambo used to astonish the marksmen by propelling perpendicularly into the air sticks about as long as an ordinary arrow, and making them drop within a marked-out space. When there was no danger of hitting anyone, he would aim at a target as if with a bow and arrow, and Sambo very seldom missed his mark. Lately he may have been seen in the City throwing his sticks over the telegraph wires, whenever there was a chance of doing so out of sight of a policeman.

“Buffalo Bill,” in his “Wild



NEGRO STICK-THROWER.



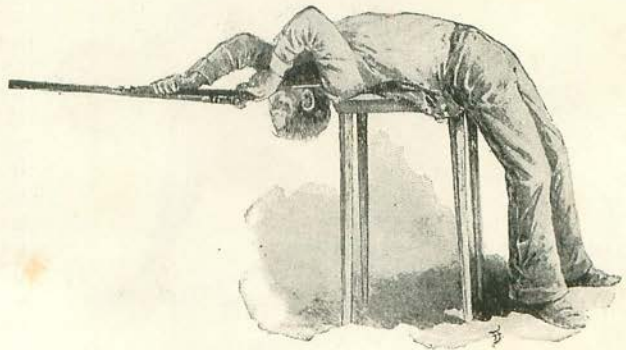
"BUFFALO BILL" SHOOTING AT GLASS BALLS.

West" Show, made us familiar with horseback shooting, but he used a gun and fired at glass balls or oranges which were thrown up by a young lady, also on horseback. Colonel Cody has had many imitators apparently quite as skilful, but there is a good deal of trickery in some of these performances. Of course, if bullets are used, the feat of breaking ten out of a dozen balls would be really wonderful; but if cartridges made up to look like bullets, but which are really filled with small shot, are used, there is nothing very marvellous in the performance.

When Dr. Carver, the once renowned

American sharpshooter, was in England some years ago, he attracted a good deal of attention by the astonishing way in which he broke a hundred little glass globes in as many shots, but when the Doctor tried his hand against the crack shots at a Wimbledon Prize Meeting, he was simply nowhere.

If a proof were wanted of the popularity of indoor marksmanship, it would be easily found by looking over the programmes of the various music-halls from all parts of the kingdom. We should be sure to find "Professor" Snapshot, or some of his numerous rivals, announced with a grand flourish.



SHOOTING THE ASH OFF A CIGAR.

One of our artist's sketches portrays a typical "Professor" with his handy-man, the latter perched on a high stool smoking a cigar, and evidently greatly gratified that the ash has once again been shot off without greater injury than a little dust in his eyes. It is a delightful luxury "for the likes of him to have to smoke a good cigar," and one which burns to a substantial ash. When you see such a performance you will not fail to observe how carefully the man smokes, watching the ash with anxious eye after every puff, knowing, as he does, that the longer the incinerated end becomes the more there will be to aim at, and less likelihood of damage to his nose.

The man is a study. Offer him a cigar on condition that he smokes it to be shot at, and he will say, to a certainty: "No, thankee; I prefer the Professor's." Don't ask him to drink with you till after the performance, but then, if he is in a yarning humour, you may spend a merry half-hour with him. Get him to tell you of his many hair-breadth escapes. He will, with a little encouragement, also immensely amuse you by relating his experiences in trying to get an understudy.

It will be readily understood that a deputy for such a post is not to be picked up "any when and anywhere."

When a likely party has been persuaded to get on the perch, smoking the fragrant weed, the "Professor" has to demonstrate to the embryo understudy that he really runs no risk—not the slightest. Most of the tyros, it appears, are so timid that Professor Snapshot has had to get a dummy figure put on the perch in the practice room, with an

imitation cigar in its mouth with a detachable ash $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long. At this mark the Professor fires, lying on his back on a table, and with such invariable success that the understudy gains confidence, and at last summons up resolution to change places with the dummy.

One of the most amusing understudies was a nigger called "Darky." He revelled in the cigars, but was apt to get sleepy. One night when he had to do deputy he shut his eyes as usual, and actually went to sleep on the stool. The explosion of the gun and the knocking away his cigar woke him with a start, and he fell forward on to the stage as if diving, and remained standing on his head with his legs resting against the stool. This startling and novel feature of the performance produced rounds of applause. It was "a decided hit," and vociferously encored. Nothing would, however, induce "Darky" to repeat the trick—not even a promise of a whole box of choice cigars. He declared that he had been killed once, and that was quite enough for him.

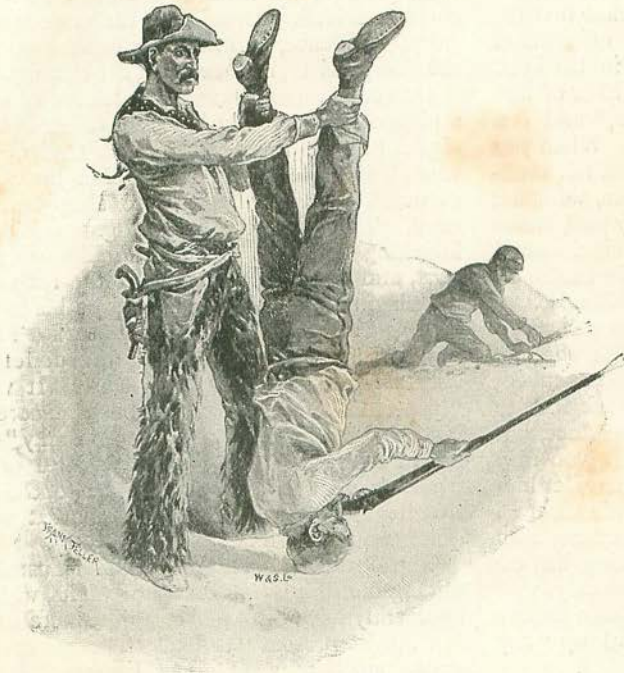
The Professor's practice room is usually underground, in some cellars or vaults, which apparently have belonged to a wine merchant, but are at present "to let." There is still a strong smell of wine about the place, and stalactites of cobwebs cover the arched roof and the dark walls. Ensconced in a safe corner, out of the way of stray shots, however erratic, but sufficiently near to see and hear, let us await the arrival of Professor Snapshot and his troupe.

He comes with Miss Lottie Duckfoot and her deputy, and the handy-man. Some assistants



MISS LOTTIE DUCKFOOT SHOOTING AT A CIRCLING BALL.

arrange the shooting paraphernalia as it will be on the music-hall stage. Lottie, dressed understudy is now practising in all the attractive charms of flesh-coloured tights. Lottie snarlingly suggests that there is "always something loose about tights"; whereupon the Professor has to intervene, and threatens to cancel Lottie's engagement, telling her that she is a regular dog in the manger, as she won't wear tights herself and won't let her deputy.



HEELS OVER HEAD.

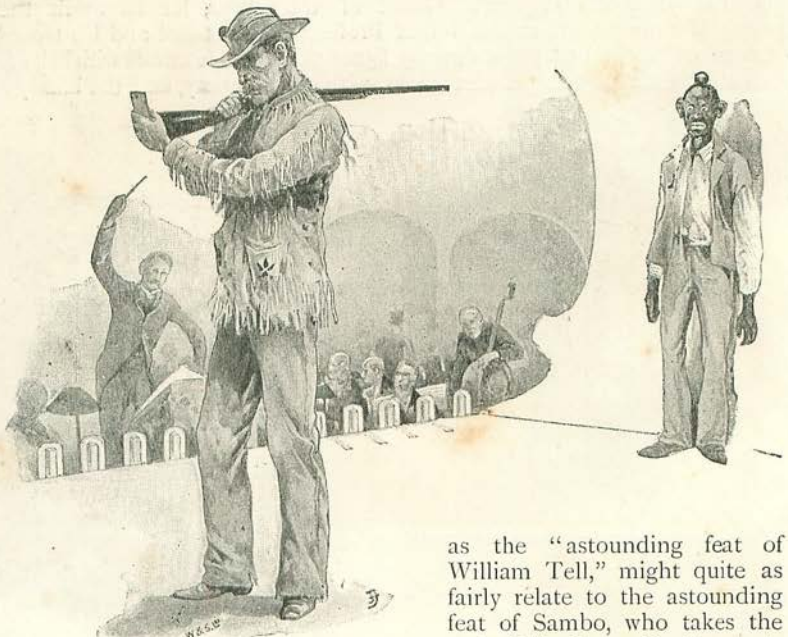
à la vivandière, begins by practising at the bobbing balls; numerous stray shots rattling on the empty bottles in the surrounding bins telling truly enough that small shot and not bullets have been used.

A discussion ensues as to whether the public prefer "tights" to petticoats for the female performers. Lottie declares that "she abominates tights. They don't become her, and she won't show in them." The handy-man whispers to us that she did once appear in tights, when someone called out, "Bravo, shakys-shanks!" and she can't forget it.

But the chubby

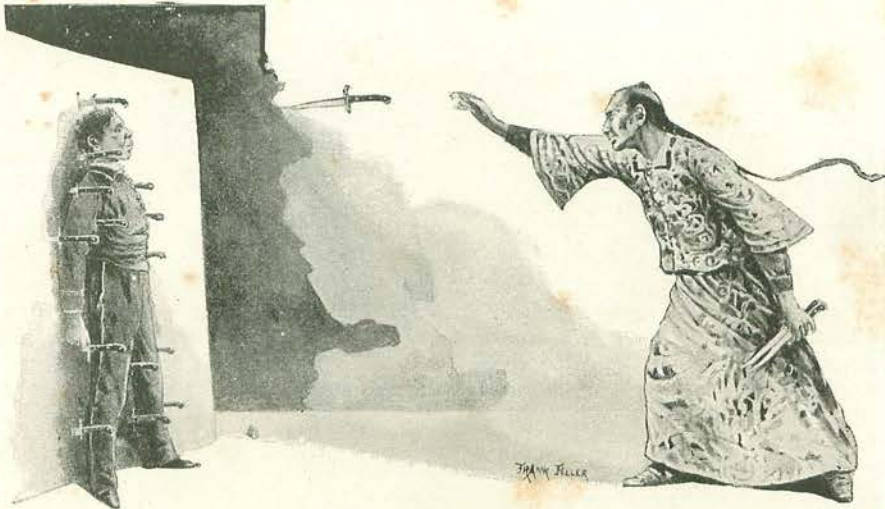
seen it tried yet.

What in the music-hall bills is described



SHOOTING OVER SHOULDER WITH LOOKING-GLASS.

as the "astounding feat of William Tell," might quite as fairly relate to the astounding feat of Sambo, who takes the part of the boy with the apple



THE CHINESE KNIFE TRICK.

on his head in this scene of William Tell *redivivus*. H.-M.—that is, the handy-man—says that it is absolutely necessary to have someone who is firm on his feet for this job, and he declares that Sambo's foot is real good measure; thirteen inches, at least.

The advantage of a good footing is further exemplified in a performance at another music-hall, where the Professor has the rifle over his shoulder and takes aim from a bit of looking-glass, which he holds at the butt-end of the gun. He can just see the foresight of his gun and the orange on the negro's head, and when the two are in alignment he fires, and generally succeeds in hitting the orange.

Before we finish with the music-halls, let us take a peep at "Professor" Chin-Chow-How, the far-famed Chinese juggler. He aims with murderous-looking knives at a boy who stands against a wooden target, into which the knives are cleverly stuck all round, but without touching the half-scared boy.

One of the latest additions to the already profuse programme is the Ambidextrous Pistolero, who, shooting first with one hand and then with the other, will put a dozen bullets successively into a visiting card at a distance of about ten yards.

We may now take a little outdoor exercise, and soon find ourselves in a crowd at a street corner looking at a game which appears to be minia-

ture quoits. Lit by a flaming naphtha lamp, there is a stall, which looks like an overgrown umbrella-stand, full of walking-sticks of all kinds. At these a man is throwing wooden rings about as large as those used for cornice-poles. These are supplied by the proprietor of the stall at six a penny. The



THE AMBIDEXTRIOUS PISTOLERO.



DEAD ON THE COCOA-NUTS.

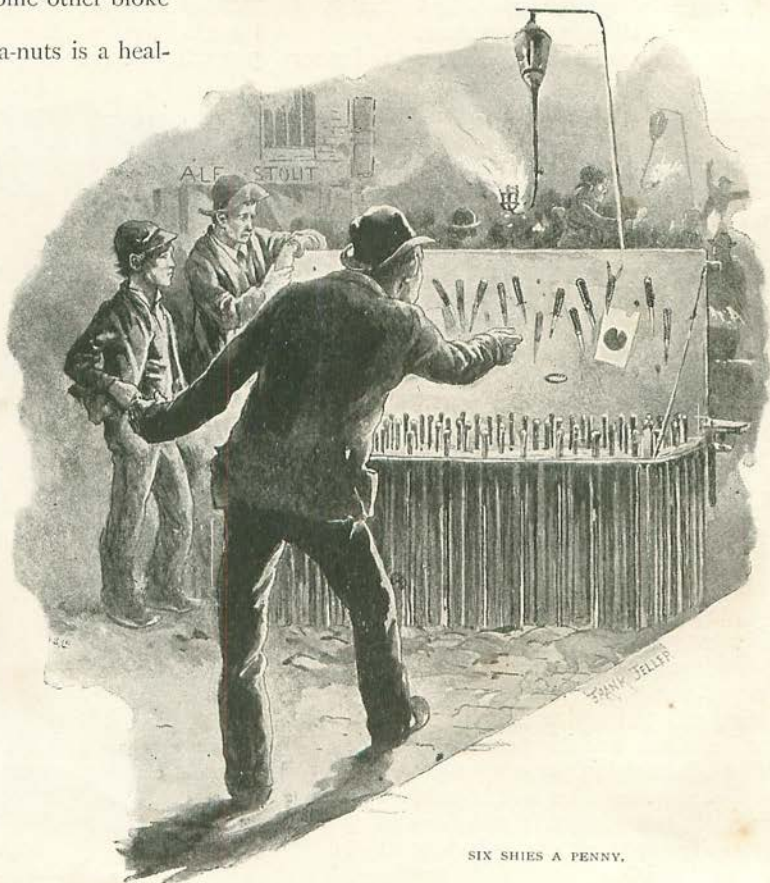
skill of the thrower is shown by his pitching the rings on to the handles of the sticks. If you ring a stick, it is yours. When you have got the knack of aiming accurately, you can get one ring on out of three, and then the proprietor usually suggests that you should "Give some other bloke a turn."

Cockshies at cocoa-nuts is a healthier amusement, because it must take place in an open space, and if on the sands at the sea-side, it is healthful and invigorating. The odds are in favour of the nuts, but recently a gentleman, who was showing his boy how to aim at them, took a nut with every ball, till the owner, looking very glum, said, "You don't want to bust up a poor man, do you?" The winner only took one nut, though he had won eighteen, and he was at once proclaimed "a real gemman; one of the right sort."

Of pea-shooters and catapults the

less said the better, unless it be by way of depreciation. By their admirers they may be looked upon as merely harmless toys, but on the other hand, they may be used in many dangerous ways, and are therefore very properly proscribed by the police regulations.

An amusing post-prandial story, showing the utility of the pea-shooter, comes to us from America. A very prosy parson had a cute young friend, to whom he had been deploring his inability



SIX SHIES A PENNY.

to keep his congregation awake during his Sunday sermons. "If I could only keep my flock awake, my addresses would do them a world of good."

"Well," replied Mr. Cute, "I'll bet you five dollars I'll keep them awake next Sunday."

"How?" inquired the parson.

"Never mind how. You let me have a seat in the gallery behind you, and leave the rest to me."

Sunday came, and Mr. Cute with his pea-shooter was in the gallery. The parson was proceeding with his sermon in his usual sleepy style, and soon one of the congregation began to settle down in the pew corner for a snooze. But at the first nod he started up, rubbed his nose, and stared round. Each would-be dozer seemed to be similarly affected, till at last the parson turned and upbraided Mr. Cute on his want of decorum.

"Never mind," said he, in a loud whisper; "you go on with your sermon: I'll keep the flock awake."

The congregation were wakeful enough



PEA-SHOOTING.

now, and the parson finished his discourse by telling his flock that:—

Some go to church for a walk;
Some go there to laugh and talk;
Some go there their time to spend,
Whilst others go to meet a friend.
Some go there to wink and nod,
But few go there to worship God.

Amongst the odd-est of odd shots was undoubtedly the man who amused Henry VIII. by making some marvellous scores with a bow and arrow while standing on one leg, the other being stretched across his breast. He was henceforth known as "Foot-in-Bosom." But this odd posture has been quite eclipsed in modern

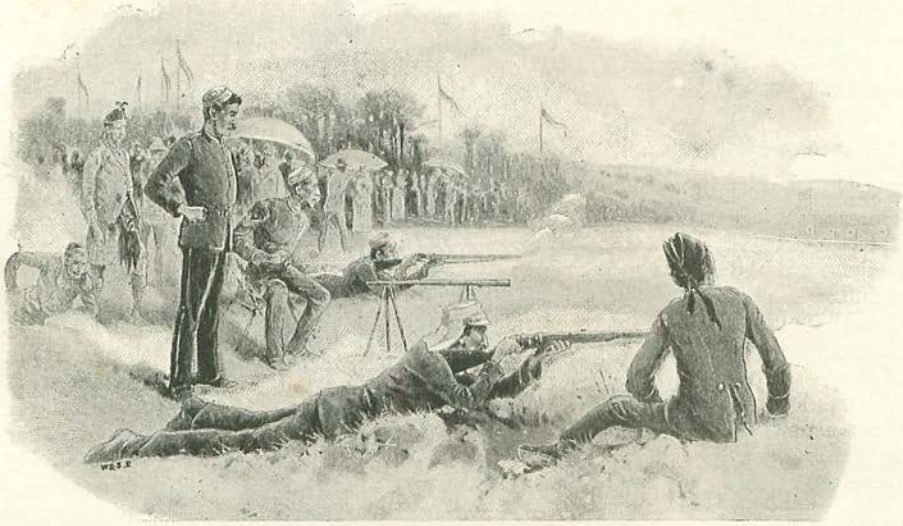
times by the renowned marksman, Farquharson, who some years ago, at a Wimbledon Meeting, startled the shooting world by firing his rifle while lying on his back. He made such marvellous scores, and won so many prizes, that the novel position was not only practised by most marksmen, but now the posture is actually taught as part of the musketry instruction in the regular army. In all-comers' contests, where "any position" is permitted,

competitors often assume it with marked success.

The prone position, being the steadiest, is generally chosen for sighting rifles, and the pool ranges at Bisley are always fully occupied for this purpose. It often requires several shots to find the bull; but as the entries are only limited by the length of the



THE BACK POSITION.



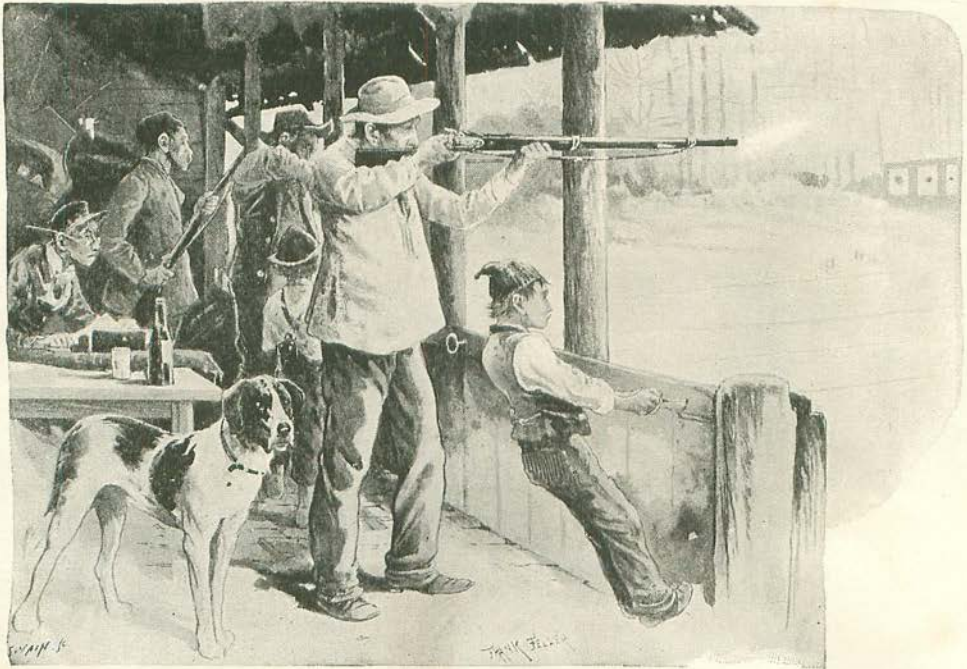
BISLEY POOL SHOOTING.

marksman's purse, he keeps on paying his shilling till he gets the correct elevation and finds the allowance to be made for that *bête noir* of the rifleman—a "fish-tail" wind.

The value of the bull's-eyes made at pool varies with the weather, being perhaps 5s. in fine weather and as many pounds in bad. The whole of the entries, less 25 per cent. deducted by the National Rifle Association,

is divided amongst the makers of bull's-eyes, and paid in cash the next morning.

Half a century ago the Swiss had the reputation of being the most famous shots in the world, and it was not surprising that they should have been tempted by the splendid shooting prizes offered at the first Wimbledon Meeting to turn up in large numbers. That notable meeting of July, 1860, attracted marks-



SWISS SHOOTING FOR PRIZES.

men from all parts of the world, but only four or five of the Swiss were able to hold their own against our Volunteers, though they were then but novices at rifle shooting. The Switzers took a few prizes at the shorter

village shooting for prizes, and the valleys re-echo with the ping of the rifle bullet on the old-fashioned iron targets, which they still prefer to the canvas substitutes which we use.

Their neighbours the Tyrolese are almost as good marksmen, and take as great a pride in teaching their children the art of shooting. They may be seen winter and summer in the

mountains snugly perched on some crag of porphyry or dolomite, attended by a youngster who watches with eager earnestness and evident delight the result of his father's effort to knock over a capering wild goat half a mile away.

There is only one other foreign sharpshooter about whom we propose to say a word, and that is the Boer of South Africa. Rorke's Drift and Majuba Hill told us only too well of their skill as sharpshooters, and though they are now principally occupied in agricultural pursuits, they generally ride from farm to farm

armed with a good rifle, and carrying a well-filled bandoleer, ready to bring down any big game they may come across. May they always confine their sharpshooting skill to like purposes.



TYROLESE MARKSMAN.

ranges, but were completely beaten at the longer distances.

Nevertheless, the Swiss are still famous shots and love rifle shooting, and on Sundays, in the summer-time, they may be seen in every



BOER SPORTSMAN.