



## Trap Shooting Not a Modern Pastime

**T**RAP shooting is the outgrowth of the oldest sport known to man with the exception of its immediate parent, the chase. From the earliest recorded history come stories of contests in marksmanship and arms under artificial conditions as tests of the skill of those engaged. The hieroglyphics of ancient Assyria, Egypt and the other early civilizations of the east tell of these contests. No climate and no people has been stranger to them. The nearest approach to the modern shooting tournament was the assemblage of the Saxon peasants in England when they met at tournaments to settle the question of superiority with the long bow, while the lords were trying conclusions with the "gentleman's" weapons. It was the boast of the expert that he could split a willow wand with his arrow at 100 paces and Lacksley proved his boast before King John and the haughty Norman nobles at the tournament at Ashby.

The old backwoodsman, whose marksmanship brought victory to American arms in many a contest with the Indians and overwhelmed Wellington's veterans at New Orleans, was able to pick out the eye of

a squirrel perched in the top of the tallest tree and wherever this class met, at husking bee or barnraising, the rifle was brought along. When work was done and sports commenced youngsters looked for the red ear, but the elders shot at a tack head on a target.

The sport which cultivates the true eye and the steady nerve has always been popular in some form or other where men were strong and loved nature. Stories could be told of wonderful shots in the chase, but the proof of the boast came when all gathered in front of the target.

With the advent of the shotgun the sport was changed in form, but not in principle. For years the trap shooter confined himself to live birds liberated from traps, but this was necessarily expensive, not always practicable on account of scarcity of birds and only a limited number could compete at a tournament. For these reasons only a comparatively few of the users of the shotgun ever visited or shot over the traps, but confined themselves to shooting in the field.

The great popularity of trap shooting came with the invention of artificial targets thrown from a spring-actuated trap, which admitted of rapidity of fire, no time

lost in retrieving "birds" and a great lessening of the cost. The first efforts in this line were glass balls and artificial "pigeons" made of tin. The tin pigeon was never very popular. In first cost it was expensive, its flight was not always certain and every once in a while some one would ruin the tin bird with a dose of "fours," which disorganized its "insides."

The first really successful artificial target was the glass ball and in a short time after its introduction not only cities but every little town had its gun club, which met regularly to pulverize glass. It required only a short time for good marksmen to master the art of catching the ball at the zenith of its flight, making it practically a still target, and when it became too easy inventive genius developed another.

Then came the real progenitor of the present "crockery" bird, the Lagowski clay pigeon. Captain Bogardus, the then champion shot, and Dr. Carver were employed to tour the country, give exhibitions and introduce the new target. Its flight was similar to the present form of artificial target, in fact little change in form of the target itself has been made. Its great fault was a failure to break when hit in

many instances, and the method of fastening it in the trap.

From the date of the introduction of the saucer-shaped target, with its nearly horizontal flight, to the present trap shooting has grown steadily in favor. It has been taken up as a sport independent of field shooting, instead of an incident thereto, and today there are many who shoot at the trap who never hunt or shoot in the field at all, though, of course, the great majority of trap shooters are not content to abjure the delights of the field. They shoot at the trap for love of shooting and because it is a possibility many times where a trip to the hunting grounds is not. It affords the opportunity of mingling with congenial company, and like all true sports trains and strengthens useful faculties—the eye and the nerve, for to be a good shot one must have a quick and accurate eye, be able to think quick and have absolute control of both mental and physical faculties.

The introduction of a series of traps and the "walk-around" system has enabled a large number of men to participate in matches and with a big squad of shooters everyone gets all the opportunity he desires to burn powder.

Between the traps and the field the lover of the gun has no need in the present day to suffer his gun to rust out in the case, for there is plenty of shooting at all seasons of the year, closed season on game or open.

For a number of years after trap shooting became popular it was a matter of comment that few of the crack shots were residents of the west, a section where a greater proportion of the people used a gun than any other and where there were field shots who had no need to take a back seat in any company. They preferred to do their shooting in the field more largely was the reason. Of late years the reverse is true. When the great handicap shoots are held in which the cracks of the country participate it is western men who compose the bulk of those placed at scratch. Iowa probably contains a greater number of men who are strictly top-notchers than any state in the union, Illinois and Missouri are liberally represented and Nebraska has several who must be reckoned with, no matter how swift the company.

From the inception of the present system of trap shooting Omaha has always been able to put out a strong squad and today any event on the club grounds brings out a number who are good for 90 per cent or better at any time.