



# THE LIGHT SIDE-ARM

By M. DuMOND

YES, THE GUN PICTURED here is the .32 Automatic Colt. The regular gun has always just fallen short of being an ideal side-arm for the woodsman, because the barrel and sighting radius are too short and the sights are not the best for small-game shooting. Yet, despite these undesirable features, this gun has always been popular with outdoorsmen, a class far different from that which the gun was originally designed to serve.

As the name implies, this Colt automatic pistol is a "Pocket Model." However, the very features that make it a pocket model, make it also a real side-arm when fitted with a six-inch barrel and suitable sights.

The potential accuracy of the original gun is great in the hand of a pistol shot that understands the little weapon, and it is improved by the added barrel length and sighting radius. The original barrel is  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, and the gun weighs about 24 ounces. The additional muzzle weight of the altered gun makes the gun considerably easier to hold, while the sighting radius is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches. I fit the gun with a  $\frac{3}{32}$ -inch ivory bead on a ramp, and a U-notch rear. This type of sight equipment seems to be preferred by the majority of woodsmen for small-game shooting although patridge-type sights can be fitted if desired.

In this little gun we have a long-barreled, extremely compact weapon that is easily and inconspicuously carried, and of unexcelled reliability. Malfunctions rarely if ever occur with good ammunition.

It is interesting to note here that the chamber on this new barrel is much tighter than the original Colt chamber. The cases look more like those shot from a good revolver, and lack the characteristic bulge near the head. They are consequently easier to resize, and last longer, when reloaded.

For small game the .32 A. C. P. is excellent; and in fact, it is just about ideal for game of the camp-meat variety. The .22 L. R. cartridge has always left much to be desired for most of us in this respect. The fact that the .22 L. R. is a poor killer is well known to almost everyone who has used it extensively on small game.

Several years ago I determined to make a test using the .22 L. R. and the .38 Special, both guns to be used under the same conditions and on the same game, including snowshoe rabbits, jacks, grouse of all kinds, and porcupines. I took all shots offered up to approximately 50 yards, intending to compare my game average with that over the Standard American Target course. Of 50 shots tried with the

.38 Special, I made 35 clean kills, hit and lost 2, and missed 13. That makes an average of 70%, or about 15 points below my average at that time over the Standard American. The gun used was a Smith & Wesson outdoorsman.

With the K22 I made 20 kills out of 50 shots taken, and some of these were hard to find after being shot. That left 30 head lost. Of this number, at least 17 were hit and lost—not a very pleasing average. On cottontails the average of the .22 would be considerably higher, as snowshoes and jacks are rather hard to kill, as are porcupines unless hit in the head. This is true even with guns of heavy caliber. After this tally, I realized that we had been losing more game with the .22 than was necessary.

We had plenty of guns of larger caliber; why not use them? Well, most of them had altogether too much of what the .22 lacked in the first place. For the power and shock of guns like the grand old Peacemaker, the average woodsman has little use. The size and weight of guns of this type make grand ballast, but in a place where ballast is absolutely not in order. They are in the way more or less, no matter where or how you carry them. While I am far from diminutive in size, standing six feet and tipping the scale around two hundred pounds, I can't pack one of these big guns all day and not come in at night with a sort of feeling that I look like the Chinese aviator, One Wing Lo. But the little .32 Automatic Colt can be worn like a watch, and you have no excuse for leaving it in camp when you may need it.

As Mr. Wagar said of it in the *RIFLEMAN* of August, 1931: "It is not a deep-wilderness side-arm capable of meeting all emergencies unaided, but as a light pistol to accompany the big rifle, it has many advantages."

An extra clip of cartridges weighs little, and is easily carried. Shot from a 6-inch barrel this little cartridge has surprising range and penetration. It is small and light, but something like the bantam-sized recruit who was asked by the hard-boiled sergeant: "What cher name?" The pint-sized soldier walked up to the sergeant, and, glaring up at him, said: "My name is Percy, but don't let it fool you."

Many people have the mistaken idea that a .45 will kill almost anything by shock alone, which is far from true.

I have never tried the .32 on anything larger than big porcupines, but many experiences with them have convinced me that, like jacks, they require good holding, even with heavy calibers.

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While hunting one day we ran onto one that immediately climbed to the top of a pin cherry tree. My partner hit him the first shot with the .32 Automatic, and he came down about half way, caught another hold, and started back up. He did the same thing three times. After the third try, I shot the porky with a .45 S. A., and knocked him completely out of the tree but failed to kill him. He had started up the tree again, when I finally killed him with a head shot. I recount this incident just to show the tenacity of this type of animal. Jacks are somewhat similar, and take a lot of killing unless hit with well-placed shots of a caliber sufficiently large to cause a rapid hemorrhage. Head shots, of course, are effective, but the brain area of a porky is relatively small.

I recall visiting a friend who took care of a camp in northern Wisconsin. As I came into the clearing by the cabin I saw that he had a big porky up a tall poplar, and was circling around to try for a head shot with a .22 rifle. The porky, though, was in such a position that a head shot was impossible; so we decided to try my .45 S. & W. 1917. At the crack of the big revolver the porky let loose and came down. The ball entered the chest under the left front leg, and apparently came out right between the ears. We rolled him over and he certainly looked plenty dead. It took about five minutes to walk to the cabin for the spade, and we got back just in time to see the porky disappear into the brush. We had to run him down and shoot him again.

As mentioned before, this type of game requires good holding even with heavy calibers. The .22 R. F. is sadly inadequate in too many instances. It doesn't make you feel too good to hit a grouse, center, and see him fly off into a swamp where it would take a good bird dog to find him. These things all have happened to most of us, and could be eliminated in large part by using a more adequate small-game cartridge. The long-barreled Colt .32 has ample power for this kind of game, and will perform well on such game as jacks and porcupines. Larger game than this is seldom taken with a belt gun.

The cost of the pistol is comparatively low, considering the fine construction. The 6-inch barrel can be removed and the original barrel replaced, all without the use of tools save one small screwdriver used to lock the front sight back in the original position. All things considered, I believe this

to be the biggest 28 ounces of belt gun I ever carried. Fully loaded it holds nine rounds.

The .32 cartridges are easy to reload and extremely economical. These little hulls can be recharged at a cost of about one-half cent each. One pound of Bullseye pistol powder will load about 3,500 rounds, using a charge of 2 grains.

Few people bother to find the cases when shooting game. If I take the time I can nearly always find them, as this pistol is quite consistent in ejecting the fired cases to the right and a little to the rear and downward. A little practice, and you will know just about where to look for them. Most of the shooting, however, is usually done at some form of target, in which case it is a simple matter to spread a tarp or blanket where the cases fall, and retrieve practically all of them. The gun functions as well with cast bullets as with the factory metal-jacketed ones.

Reloading this cartridge has been quite thoroughly discussed in the aforementioned article by Mr. Wagar. It would be well worth anyone's time to look this article up and read it carefully.

At the time of this writing I am working on a new bullet for this fine little cartridge. While I have not had time, as yet, to test it sufficiently, it seems to have considerably more killing power than any other tried so far, although it destroys a little more meat than is absolutely necessary.

This gun fills the gap between the Woodsman and the Super .38 Automatic. It has proven the most useful of the three, and is the gun that goes with me on my next trip in the bush.

Summarizing, the gun is so light and compact that it can be carried comfortably, and scarcely noticed, yet it has sufficient size and muzzle weight to make hard and accurate holding possible. The cartridges are procurable almost anywhere, and are of such a convenient size that a goodly supply can readily be taken along. As to accuracy and functional reliability, the gun leaves little to be desired. Fully loaded it holds nine rounds, and it can be discharged with amazing rapidity. Should an occasion ever arise that necessitates its use in self defense, it will give a good account of itself.

The next time that the trail fever gets to a point where it is absolutely irresistible, pack this little gun along.