CHIC AND I

BY BEN-HUR

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.....OR.....

THE PRACTICAL TRAINING OF A DOG FOR THE GUN.

BEING A COMMON SENSE AND THOROUGHLY PRACTICAL METHOD OF EDUCATING A HUNTING DOG FOR FIELD WORK, TOGETHER WITH ENTERTAINING AND INSTRUCTIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF HUNTING TRIPS.

ILLUSTRATED.

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Contents.

Introductory.

In the great field of sport, as in all other occupations or professions, there are always, and always will be, beginners, and the object of the succeeding chapters will be not only to entertain, but to assist the beginner in training his dog, finding the game with it, and using his gun. Good society throws around its members the protecting barrier of an introduction, admitting only those who can come well recommended. I will spend no time on my own introduction, modestly assuming that the readers of these pages will come to the conclusion that he who now humbly knocks for admittance to their charming circle is not altogether unworthy. Neither would my boon companion, Chic, require any introduction if you could see her. She is a liver, white and ticked pointer of the female persuasion, bred in the purple, counting many prize winners in the field and on the bench among her ancestors. Her register number is 29072, and if you want to know any more about her than you will learn in these pages, you are respectfully referred to the A. K. C. S. B. She is a little beauty and is as good as she is handsome. My other companion is a twelve-gauge ejector gun, and if I don't get the bird it is because I do not hold the gun properly. Chic and I are not particular when we are on a hunt. A couple of sandwiches in my shooting coat pocket will do for me for all day, and as for Chic, she utterly disdains food of any kind when there is a chance of regaling her delicate nostrils with the delicious scent of game, working all day on the promise of a good supper at nightfall.

To the man who really loves his dog it seems as if the latter could almost talk. Let a man, especially, be alone, having no family cares or joys, making his home in boarding houses or hotels, or in furnished rooms and restaurants; let this man take a puppy, rear it, nurse it through all its ills of puppyhood, and train it carefully for the field; let him make a daily companion of it, and it is astonishing how well the dog will grow to understand and love him, and it would be a sorry apology for a man who would not reciprocate. He will soon believe that the dog knows more than some school teachers, and that it can actually convey to him its wants and desires. In reading articles about dogs we often see such remarks as: "He wagged his tail as much as to say," or: "He looked up at me as much as to say," etc. In the succeeding chapters, in order to avoid the repetition of the above and kindred phrases, I will put the language into the mouth of my four-footed friend, and I make this explanation so that none of my readers may think that I am writing fables or presuming too much on their credulity. If Chic does not actually use words and sentences, she comes as near it as any dog I ever saw, and some of them will say "Good morning," "Thank you," or "Get away from here," plainly enough to be perfectly well understood.

I cannot close this self introduction without a word in favor of the AMERICAN FIELD, the greatest sportsman's paper in the greatest and most progressive country on earth. When I first heard of the AMERICAN FIELD I had just returned from a little outing and had thought it perfectly proper to shoot into a bunch of quails dusting themselves in the road. At that time I knew nothing about game seasons or the ethics of sportsmanship, and did not consider it necessary to give the bird any chance for its life. Indeed, as far as the latter consideration is concerned, the bird had all the chances in the world, even if it was on the ground, and if on

the wing it was as safe as though surrounded by a bullet-proof inclosure, for I could not have hit a flock of barns unless I was inside of one with the doors shut. But the sportsman's instinct was in me and when I began reading the AMERICAN FIELD it did not take long for me to imbibe the principles of true sportsmanship which it continually and tirelessly and fearlessly inculcates. I can give no better advice to the beginner than to at once subscribe for the AMERICAN FIELD and continue to take it and read it thoroughly. It will make you ashamed to do any unsportsmanlike thing.

CHAPTER I

Chic's Alphabet.

Chic came to me one evening in September and she was about the dirtiest and certainly the hungriest puppy I ever saw. She had come all the way from Ohio to San Diego, California, and I do not believe those express messengers had given the poor thing a bite to eat all the way. She was perfectly ravenous, and on the way from the express office to my office she strained at the lead chain all the way in the vain attempt to find something in the gutters to satisfy her voracious appetite. My friend and I critically examined her, after first giving her a good supper, to which she did ample justice, and pronounced her first-class. She was then about four months old, and the next morning after she had had a good bath and a rub-down with a dry flannel cloth, she was a sight to do a sportsman's eyes good. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," and so it proved in this case, for I have always been proud of Chic.

I intended to train her myself and went at it immediately, her first lesson being given her the first morning that I owned her. But the first lesson was a very simple one, as it consisted simply in bathing her, rubbing her down and petting her a little, being very careful, in all of this, not to hurt her at all or give her any cause for alarm, and after this giving her a light, but toothsome breakfast. The object of this was to gain her confidence and affection, and it was, and generally is, very easily done. For a week she was kept tied up except twice a day, when I gave her a

little exercise, and during this time no one was allowed to pet or fondle her, or feed her. At the end of the week she was allowed a little more freedom and generally spent the day with me at the office.

The first two weeks, however, were spent in a careful, painstaking endeavor to impress upon her mind that I was her friend and that of no one else could she expect as good treatment as from me. Then I began her more especial training. The first lesson was to charge. For this lesson I prefer a puppy of from six to ten weeks old. Their little muscles and bones are soft and pliable then, and more easily and readily adapt themselves to strained or unnatural positions. I do not believe in feeding very much raw meat even to a grown dog, and only a very little or none at all to a puppy. For this reason a taste of raw meat once in a while is relished by them very much. Taking a couple of pieces of raw meat of about half an ounce weight each and taking her just before meal time and when she was quite hungry, I gave her one of the pieces of meat. Of course she gulped it down with a relish and plainly asked for more. Instead of this, however, I put one hand upon her shoulders, the other upon her haunches and quietly and slowly, but firmly, forced her down into a "charge" position. She whined a little and squirmed considerably, and as soon as she found herself on the floor she turned over on her back and put her paws up pleadingly. She was quietly turned over again, her tail and forepaws straightened, and her head gently forced down upon the latter. Up to this time I had not said a word, but the instant the correct position was attained, I said quietly and in an ordinary tone of voice: "Sh! Charge!" Whether it was from astonishment at the unusual performance or startled at the sound of my voice I know not, but she was still for the space of probably a couple of seconds, when I abruptly removed both hands, snapped my fingers and exclaimed sharply and in a little louder tone, "Up!" She sprang

to her feet and capered around in great glee, and was immediately given a second piece of meat. Then she was petted a trifle and led out to her meal. Only one lesson per day was given the first two or three days, and then two lessons per day were given. This must be regulated by the disposition of the dog. If he shows fright, more care must be taken with him and the first lessons must be made shorter and farther between. If the dog is apt and takes readily to his instructions, he may be proceeded with more rapidly.

About the third or fourth lesson after she had become quiet in the position of "charge" I gently lifted my hands from her a trifle. She instantly started to spring up but at the first indication of a move she found the strong hand pressing her down and the command "Sh!" was given. Then the hands were again lifted a trifle. This time she remained quiet, and in two or three seconds the command "Up!" was given, accompanied always with a snap of the fingers, and she was released. At each lesson after this the same maneuver was repeated and at the end of three or four days from the time this was begun I could stand upright and wait for five minutes before giving her the command that released her from the position. Each lesson was given just before feeding her and each lesson was accompanied by something that she liked to eat. If she obeyed readily and did well, she was immediately rewarded by the dainty, and at once given her food. If she was recalcitrant and stubborn, she was made to comply and then went without the tid-bit and the meal was postponed for an hour or so. It is astonishing how soon an intelligent dog will learn that his good treatment depends upon his good behavior; that dainties and praises follow obedience, and punishment of some kind, not necessarily corporal punishment, but a punishment as sure and uncompromising as fate, follows disobedience, slothfulness or stubbornness. I praised Chic unstintedly when she did well; scolded her very little

and whipped her not at all—at this stage of her training—when she performed poorly. She soon learned to appreciate and love my praises and looked very forlorn and downcast when she was reproved instead.

After getting her to the stage where I could stand up and hold her in the position, I then moved slightly away from her. At the first movement of my foot, she turned her head sharply to see what I was doing. Instantly the head was replaced in position, the command repeated, and I again moved slightly away. This time only the eyes rolled around inquiringly, but the dainty head remained as if fastened to the forepaws. An instant I held her so and then released her. This was repeated day after day until I could go to the other end of the room and she would not move. At first I remained always in her sight, but now I began to move away from her and back of her. The temptation to turn her head and to look to see where I was going, female curiosity, I suppose, was almost irresistible, but patience and firmness overcame this also. Then I went farther and would go into the next room. Here, through the crack of the door where it is hung on the hinges, I could watch her and she did not know I was looking. If she moved ever so slightly the command "Sh!" warned her that she was watched and that there was no escape but to obey. When I could go into the next room and read the paper and smoke a cigar and come back and find her unmoved, I considered her education in this one matter completed. Once she took advantage of me. I came back from the other room and found her standing on her hindfeet looking out of the window intently watching some dogs across the way. So intent was she that she had not heard me, and with a folded newspaper in my hand, I stole up softly behind her and brought it down with a sounding thwack across her hip. Of course it didn't hurt her, but she was badly frightened, and I then took her back to the place where she had been made to charge, put her at charge again and

kept her there for an hour. The little piece of chicken which I had for her was put away and did duty at the afternoon lesson. She never forgot it and I had no trouble with her after that. I do not think very much of the "charge" position for field work. It seems to me to be a hardship on the dog to command him to charge at the sound of the gun and at the most exciting moment, the very moment when he is all attention, when every fiber of his being trembles with nervous anxiety to see what becomes of the birds, when every nerve in his extremely nervous body is strung to its highest pitch, to then oblige him to sink out of sight with his head between his paws and lose all the pleasure of the sport, seems to me to be little short of absolute cruelty. If the dog is standing at "toho," he can see what is going on, see whether the bird falls or not, and in a very short time will learn to mark down the birds which escape the gun much more accurately than his master can. But if you wish to take your dog with you into your blind where you are hunting ducks or geese, immediate and strict obedience to the command is indispensable. If you are sitting comfortably there watching your decoys, and suddenly see a flock of birds coming swiftly toward you, there is no time to argue with your dog. He is sitting up beside you; perhaps he has seen the same flock of birds before you did; there is no time to beg him to drop, no time to command him in a loud voice to lie down, no time to take him by the nape of the neck and force him down. Everything must be done swiftly and noiselessly and at the softly breathed "Sh!" he must sink out of sight as completely and quietly as the snowflake on the bosom of the river.

But there are also times when you require your dog to lie down merely for the purpose of getting him out of the way, either for his own sake or for the convenience of those about him, as in a crowded room. For such purposes as this it does not seem necessary to make the dog charge. The charge position is not

a comfortable one. I have occasionally seen dogs quietly settle into it of their own free will but they seldom maintain it long of their own desire. It is a very simple matter to teach the dog the difference between "charge" and "lie down," the latter meaning that he may take any position he chooses so long as he lies down out of the way and stays there, while the former means, as we well know, that he must take a particular position. Chic took very readily to the command to lie down, and it was only the work of a very few lessons to teach her. Approaching her when she was standing up I said quietly, but in a tone of command: "Lie down!" at the same time placing my hand upon her shoulders and forcing her down. She rolled over on her side and grinned at me and I permitted her to retain the position. Keeping her there a few minutes, I gave the command "Up!" and she jumped quickly to her feet. After a very few lessons, at the command to lie down, she would seek some favorite corner, which I also permitted, and curl herself up in a comfortable position and quietly compose herself for a nap. If I wanted her to lie down in a particular corner, I would walk to that corner, call her to me, point to the corner and give the command. In a short time it was unnecessary for me to go to the particular corner or spot. I only had to point to it when she would walk over and lie down at the command. I had a blanket for her to lie on in one corner of a closet which opened right off from my office. After teaching her the command to lie down thoroughly, I began to take her into the closet, point to her bed and say "Lie down; go to bed!" After a couple of times the words "lie down" were omitted and in four or five lessons she learned that "go to bed" meant to go to this particular place and lie down and stay there. I never used the command "go to bed" except when I intended to have her go to this particular spot, and thus she never confused it with anything else.

It is a great comfort to have your dog so thoroughly

under your control that you may prevent him from becoming a nuisance to other people. Everyone does not like dogs, and if your dog persists in making himself too familiar with strangers he may get hurt, you may get angry and your new acquaintance may feel insulted. If your dog is taught to lie down instantly at the command, or to go to any corner you may point out, and lie down out of the way, you prevent him from getting hurt, prevent others from thinking that he is a nuisance, and add greatly to your own peace of mind.

CHAPTER II

Preliminaries.

It may as well be confessed right here that the writer is an old bachelor and at the time of which I am now writing, my rooms were on the same floor as my office and opened right off the office through the closet mentioned in the foregoing chapter. At first Chic had a kennel made for her at the foot of the back stairs. Every morning when I went down to unloose her, I would stop on the top step, and out of her sight, and whistle. Each time I carried a little piece of cracker or some little thing that she liked to eat. I used the same whistle all the time, and by proceeding in this fashion she soon learned that the whistle meant that I was coming and that there was something good to eat in it, and at the sound of the whistle she would scramble out of her kennel and tug frantically at the chain, in desperate efforts to get away and run to me. I do not whistle very loudly with my mouth, so I invested in a bicycle whistle and in a very few days of the above training she would come on a run at the sound of the whistle. She gradually picked up the meaning of the word "come," also, but I was doubtful of the utility of this picked-up knowledge and results showed that my doubts were well founded.

One day I had occasion to punish her for some breach of decorum in her indoor habits, and shortly after I called her to come to me. She was lying down in a corner across the room and when I said "come," she only looked at me and curled herself up a little tighter. It was just what I wanted her to do, for now

was the opportunity to teach her that she must come when called, and that it was not at all optional with her whether she came or not. I had a stout cord convenient, one wants one always at hand when training a puppy, and this I immediately tied to her collar, then going back across the room, I again said "come." She looked quietly at me and plainly intimated that she didn't care anything about seeing me. I instantly began hauling her in rapidly hand over hand. She came part of the way on her belly, part on her back and part on her side. She came none of the way on her feet. When she arrived she was a very much surprised dog, but I petted her and caressed her and made as much over her as though she had done a great thing. Then I let her loose and she went back to her corner and laid down again. The cord was still attached to her collar and after waiting about a minute, I repeated the command, "come." She only looked at me and replied that she was comfortable where she was, and the next moment she was skating across the floor again in the most undignified manner possible. Again she was petted as though she had done perfectly right and again the operation was repeated. Some five or six times the trial was made but with no apparent effect. She got angry and so did I, and when I found myself getting angry I quit. If you cannot control your temper do not try to train a dog; the moment you feel your anger getting the upper hand, stop right there and begin again when you get cooled off.

The next day I got out the cord and repeated the lesson, but all to no purpose. She positively would not come and I now saw, what I had not noticed before, that she was inclined to be very stubborn when once she "got sot" in her way. Again I found myself getting very angry and again I quit, but I made up my mind what to do next day. I was thoroughly convinced from the way Chic acted that she knew what I meant

by the command to come and that her failure to obey was due to nothing but stubbornness.

Next day I left the cord off and took down my dog whip. We were both in good humor; Chic had been out for a play and was as contented and happy as could be. I called her to come, and the moment I spoke the word she dropped her ears and sneaked off

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in the opposite direction and laid down. I walked over to her and struck her a good hard blow with the whip, then walked back across the room and repeated the command. She paid no attention and I walked over and cut her again. This time I struck her as hard as I could, and I saw the flesh raise in a welt where

the whip cut. It seems cruel to write of it; it seemed cruel to do it; it seemed so at the time, but I then thought and still think that there was no other way under the circumstances. She plainly knew what I wanted and stubbornly refused to do it, although she was always petted or fed when she did it and given to understand in every way that it was what I wanted. I kept my temper and administered the punishment methodically and severely. I don't know how long it took; it seemed hours to me before she finally came to me. But she finally did. She came crawling across the room on her stomach and I tell you I was glad to see her come. I threw down the whip and petted and caressed her, perhaps I kissed her, I don't remember, but at any rate I made her understand that it was all right. Then I went across the room intending to call her over to me, but when I got there I found her right at my heels. I then made her charge and went back and called her to me. She was very glad to come. After this had been repeated several times she came on the jump, and seemed to have forgotten all about her whipping. But she had not forgotten it. She always knew what "come" meant after that. I took her out and washed her in a mixture of alcohol, arnica and witch hazel, and the next day there wasn't a sign of the punishment and not a particle of soreness. I do not believe in much whipping, but I do believe that the proverb: "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is fully as applicable to dogs as to children.

I had to repeat this lesson for Chic about two years afterward. I had tried to break her of rolling in carrion, and had succeeded pretty well, when one day she came in smelling of something foul. I went out to see what it was, and finally found a dead bird that she had been rolling on. I called her to come to me, but she, knowing that she was going to get her nose rubbed in it, refused to come and stuck her tail between her legs and ran away from me. It was no longer a question of the carrion, but one of obedience.

I went over to the office and got my cord and whip, she running along by the way perfectly satisfied and doubtless thinking that she had got the best of me. I got the cord and whip and started back. When near the place I called her in to heel and walked along, but she sneaked away without my noticing her and when I got there she was nowhere in sight. Here were two infractions; the thing was getting serious. I soon found her, and, putting on the cord, took her back to the carrion. Letting her loose, she ran to the full length of the cord. When I told her to come she positively refused, and not only refused but tried to get away. It was the same old fight over again, only it was more severe this time. She was full grown now; she was only a puppy at the first trial. I think the contest lasted about two hours but she finally submitted, crawled up to me, and was visibly surprised when I just touched her nose to the offensive object and then petted and talked kindly to her instead of whipping her for rolling in it. She never refused to come when called after that and has never rolled in carrion since.

One of the most important things to be observed in teaching a dog to come readily when called is never to punish him when he comes to you. If the dog deserves punishment go to him and administer it; never call him to you and then whip him. This calling a dog up and then whipping him after he comes is responsible more than anything else for so many dogs coming in a cringing manner when called. Nothing so quickly appeals to the sympathy and love of a true friend of the dog as to see him come in to his master in a manner that plainly betokens fear. There is no necessity for it, and if the dog is properly trained he will come gladly, at once and under any circumstances when called.

Chic is very fond of play, and yet no matter how interesting her game, no matter how choice some

morsel that she has just found, she comes at once and on a run when called.

One other lesson is necessary before teaching the fundamental one of "toho!" That is the lesson to jump when ordered. I placed a chair at a convenient place and bade her "get up in the chair." Of course she did not know what that meant, but by placing my hand above the chair, patting it and snapping my fingers she discovered that something was wanted up there. She placed her feet upon the chair and then, assisting herself by her hindfeet, climbed up. She was immediately rewarded and praised. Then saying "stay there" I walked away. She immediately started to jump down, but repeating the command, accompanied with a lifting of the hand, was sufficient to keep her there. When ready to have her down the command "jump" was given, accompanied by a snap of the fingers, and she immediately jumped down. The connection here of these motions with those of former lessons will be plainly seen. The command to stay there was new to her, but the uplifted hand was immediately associated in her mind with the former lesson in "charge." She knew that that meant that she was not to move from her position, whatever it might be, and a few lessons of this kind so fixed the words in her mind that it became unnecessary to raise the hand. Neither did she know what the word "jump" meant, but she knew that when she was released from the position of charge it was done with a snap of the finger, and she readily associated that sound with the desire to do as she wanted to. She wanted to jump down because she knew that I had a piece of meat in my hand, and when I snapped my fingers down she came. This was kept up until at the command to get up in the chair she would readily go to the chair pointed out and either jump or climb into it. Then another chair was placed exactly opposite it and at the command "jump" I held my hand over the other chair with a small

piece of meat held in my fingers in plain sight. She would leap from her chair, cross the room at a bound, and jump into the other one, and was then rewarded with the coveted piece of meat. When this lesson was sufficiently learned I did away with the first chair and used only one, using also only the one command "jump."

At first I always took care to use a chair on the opposite side of the room, as her anxiety to get the meat would lead her to come quickly, and as she could jump into the chair quicker than she could stop and climb, and so get the meat quicker, she invariably did so. A little later I would take her up close to the chair and say "jump!" If she showed a disposition to climb she was gently pressed back and not allowed to get into the chair in that way. If after one or two trials she still persisted in trying to climb she was again taken across the room and given a little run for it. By persevering in this method she finally learned that the only way for her to get that piece of meat was by jumping after it, and then the lesson was learned.

Many will call this nonsense and poppy-cock, and all that, but it is a great comfort to have the wagon drive up and at the command have your dog jump into it, and then at the word have him lie down out of the way and stay there until you are ready to use him. I used to hunt with a man who never allowed his dogs to jump either in or out of the wagon. This was all very well when they were puppies, but when they got to be grown dogs weighing from fifty to fifty-five pounds each it was no fun to lift them in and out of the wagon with their feet sprawling in every direction, and just as liable to poke you in the eye as not. His reason was that he did not want them to jump out of the wagon and go off hunting on their own account, and that when he left them in the wagon for a few minutes and went away he wanted to know that he would find them there when he

came back. If he had taught his dogs to "stay there" when told, there would have been no danger of their leaving the wagon while he was gone. In the present chapter I did not place much stress on this command, but I will here say that under no circumstances did I ever allow Chic to get down out of the chair, or, later on, to move from any place where I had placed her and told her to stay, until she was given permission. The result is that when I get ready for a hunt Chic dances around the wagon until she is told to jump in, and she never loses any time in obeying that welcome command. When the hunting grounds are reached I get out, arrange matters about the horse and wagon, assemble my gun, put the shellls in my pocket and then, with a snap of the fingers and the word "jump" Chic is out in a jiffy. In order to try her I have sometimes got everything ready and deliberately walked off and left her in the wagon. The expression of grief and anxiety on her face at such times was pitiful, but she never jumped out until told.

The command is useful at other times also. How many times have you started off somewhere and would have liked to take your dog with you, but did not know what to do with him after you got there? The run with the buggy would be a splendid thing for your housed up city dog, but at the end of your journey you had some business or pleasure to attend to and the poor dog would be in the way. Well, I have many times driven out on such trips, and at the end of the journey I would simply put Chic in the buggy and then, without strap or chain of any kind, with no fastening at all, simply say "stay there," and raise my hand warningly and go about my business. I have left her that way for two and a half to three hours at a time and never failed to find her in the buggy when I returned. How often, too, have you been out after quails, grouse or something of that kind and unexpectedly run across a little flock

of ducks feeding in some small pond or a bend in the river where you could make a splendid sneak on them—if it were not for the dog? In such cases, too, I have often left Chic in the buggy while I went after the game. When your dog will sit and watch you go after game, see the gun in your hand and know well what you are after, when she will see the shot and perhaps even see the bird fall and not offer to leave the buggy, then you may consider that the command to "stay there" is well learned, and that the results are fully worth the trouble it has been to attain them. Then if your bird falls in the water you turn to your dog and whistle, or beckon with your hand if the wind is too strong, or the distance too great for the whistle to be heard, and see him leap with a glad bound out of the buggy and "fill the air full of himself," as a friend of mine used to say, in getting to you, then you are repaid for double the trouble it has been to teach him all this. Many will say: "Pshaw! I'll send my dog to a trainer and have him trained right and not go to all that trouble." Well and good if you can spare the $100 that it costs to have your dog well trained. But even then, if I were only to keep one or two dogs, I would prefer to train them myself for the reason that the dog will always work more willingly for the man who has handled him and taught him all that he knows. Again, if you have trained the dog yourself and he afterward develops some fault, or if in the excitement of the hunt he forgets some part of his teaching, you will know how to correct the fault, while, if you have not trained him yourself, you will be utterly at sea, and in attempting to correct it may only make a bad matter worse. I do not wish to seem to be interfering with the work of the professional trainers. There are many of them, and many good ones, and I trust there will always be enough sportsmen who have money to pay for the work, and neither time nor inclination to do it them-

selves, to keep them busy. But my own experience is that the average amateur who is young and has time and patience will find that the trouble of training his own dog will be more than repaid by the added satisfaction that he will afterward derive from his dog's work. You will never know, until you have tried it, the feeling of utter complacency and peace with all the world that comes from seeing your pet do an unusually fine piece of work and know that that is the result of your own patience, persistency and kindness. Perhaps the aggravation of seeing your dog make an inexcusable blunder where you are certain that he knows better is enhanced also; I do not know just how that is.

CHAPTER III

Toho!

Having passed through the preliminaries I now considered it time to take up the most important lesson in Chic's education. The lesson in "toho" is the fundamental lesson in the whole system of dog training. Upon its perfect success depends, in a great measure, the success of all the other branches. It is not indispensable that the word "toho" shall be used. Any other word that is short and sharp, such as "whoa!" "ah!" or "hi!" may be employed. It is only necessary to have some word or sound hearing which the dog will immediately become immovable. If you wish to train your dog so that no one can use him but yourself, you may employ words not ordinarily used by sportsmen, and then if some villain without the fear of the Lord before his eyes steals your dog, either with the idea of keeping him or only to use for some afternoon's sport, he will, as he ought, find the dog useless to him. I knew one sportsman who was familiar with the Indian language and he trained his dog altogether in that tongue, and it would do you good to see that dog get over the ground to retrieve a bird at the command "Uh! uh!" given in a grunt.

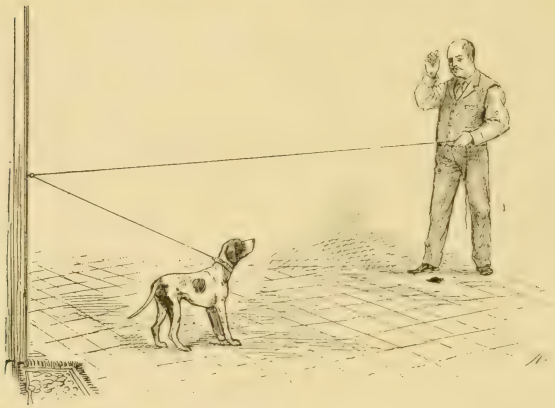
Of such importance do I consider this lesson that I would not give it to the dog at first. I would rather the dog had first imbibed some idea of obedience and had been given enough preliminary instruction to understand that it was not play but business, and that his well being and happiness depended upon his obedience and tractability. If the preliminary

lessons have been thoroughly given there will be very little trouble in the present one. None of the earlier lessons, however, require so much patience from both dog and master, and, although thoroughness in all the lessons should be conscientiously observed, yet a little laxity in the former lessons will not be nearly so unfortunate in its results as in the lesson of "toho!"

I took Chic when she was quite hungry, as I had purposely allowed a longer time than usual to elapse since her previous meal. Taking a firm hold on her collar with my left hand I took two small pieces of meat in my right hand. Giving her one of them to whet her appetite a little more, I passed the other one in front of her nose so that she could make no mistake as to what it was and dropped it on the floor in front of her and just out of her reach. Of course she made a lunge for it, and when she found she was held she struggled frantically to get at it. I held her firmly until she became perfectly quiet and then said quietly, "toho!" Holding her for perhaps two or three seconds after giving the word I let her go, at the same time snapping my fingers and clucking to her. This is the first time that the "cluck" has been employed, and the idea is to give her to understand that when she hears that sound she is at liberty to do whatever she pleases. In this instance she pleased to pick up the meat very quickly. Many amateurs in training the dog in this lesson will use the words "pick it up." It comes very natural to say this, and the dog will very readily learn what the words mean, but if the words are used in this connection they cannot be afterward used in teaching the dog to retrieve, for he will invariably associate the words "pick it up" with the idea of eating something, and when told to pick up a dead bird will immediately pinch and mouth it all out of shape.

I proceeded with this lesson very much in the same manner as in the first lesson. At first I gave only one short lesson a day. After three or four days I

gave two lessons per day. The object in proceeding thus carefully is not to tire or disgust the puppy. The lessons were short and made more and more frequent as she progressed, although, of course, when more than two lessons per day were given each lesson could not be followed by a full meal. Indeed this is not necessary except at first. The idea is to let the dog learn that if he does his work well he will be rewarded; if otherwise he will not be rewarded, and



CHIC AND I—TOHO!

will perhaps be chided, perhaps punished, according to the gravity of his offense. At the fourth or fifth lesson I took my hand from her collar, and, as in the first lessons on "charge," she immediately moved. Instantly she was checked, and if she had moved a foot out of place she was gently put back into the first position and the command repeated. Absolute immobility is important in this lesson. I did not allow her to even turn her head or lift a foot after the command was given. Gradually prolonging the time between the command to toho and the permission to take the meat, I soon had her so I could hold her for

five minutes or more. Then a cord was put on the collar and the meat was thrown farther from her. Holding her for a short time, perhaps ten seconds, at toho I clucked to her and said "Go on." She sprang forward, but just as she reached the meat she was checked by the cord and commanded to toho! Held in this position for about half a minute she was allowed to pick up the meat, but only at the command. This lesson was gone through with in the same manner as before, and when perfect in it the meat was thrown clear across the room and she was checked two or three times before reaching it. At these and all succeeding lessons I added to the cluck the words "Go on." This was for the purpose of teaching her to go on when ordered, but she must not pick up the meat until clucked to.

Chic showed considerable impatience in these lessons and I proceeded very slowly and carefully. Having finally perfected her in this I began to teach her to proceed carefully. Naturally when given the order to go on she would make a lunge forward so as to get the meat. Throwing the meat clear across the room I held a taut cord on her and said "Go on," but when she started as before to run for it I said "careful," at the same time holding her by the cord so that she could proceed but slowly. I should have said that before entering on this part of the lesson she was so far perfected in "toho" that I could stop her as many times as I chose without the use of the cord at all. Indeed, I could even stop her right at the piece of meat, call her back and send her to it again without using the cord. Proceeding with the lesson in "careful" as above shown, stopping her two or three times on the way, I soon had her so that I could start her out and she would proceed very slowly and cautiously, as though on a hot scent, come to "toho" at the meat, pick it up at command and run back to me wagging her tail knowing that she had done well. One thing more was needed to perfect her in toho, and that was

to stop at the motion of the hand without the voice. In order to do this I put a screw-eye in the door casing and passed the cord through it. Then calling her to me I crossed over to the opposite side of the room and dropped the meat at my feet. Then clucking to her I let her come two or three feet and then called "toho!" at the same time checking her with the cord and raising my right hand perpendicularly above my head. And here I made quite a serious error which young trainers will do well to profit by. As stated, I raised my right hand with the command to toho but I would hold it there until ready to let her come on. She soon learned to watch my hand, and when I started to lower it she was ready to move. She even watched my fingers, and if I closed them in order to bring the thumb and fingers together for the purpose of snapping them, she was off. It rather pleased me to have her so attentive and observant, until I suddenly thought that if I were out in the field with her and wanted to stop her fifty or one hundred yards away, it would be rather inconvenient to have to hold up my hand as long as I wanted to keep her standing. So I had some of my work to do over again. I began as before, except that instead of holding my hand I merely raised it, held it for an instant and then lowered it. If she started she was instantly checked, and in a few lessons learned that lowering the hand was not necessarily a signal for her to come on.

These lessons took about three weeks, and if a dog is contrary or does not show a special aptitude for learning, it will take even longer than this to do it perfectly. Of course I speak now of those who have business to attend to and cannot give all their time to training a dog or dogs. When I had Chic so that she would stop instantly at the command, go on at command, and go either fast or slowly, stand at "toho" without moving a muscle, I considered the lesson learned. In order that she should forget none of it, however, she was daily put through all she had

learned before. The importance of this lesson in "toho" will be clearly seen in the trips afield which it will hereafter be my pleasure to describe. The word "toho" is pronounced by some with the accent on the first syllable. I use it without any particular accent on either syllable and with the last syllable slightly prolonged. In connection with these lessons I had taught her to come to me at a beckon of the hand, which was very easily done by simply beckoning every time I said "come." Coming to "toho" at the raising of the hand is also a very important matter, as will be seen later on when we come to training to the whistle, and one cannot be too particular to have this lesson absolutely perfectly learned. Pet dogs are sometimes taught to let a piece of meat alone at the word "poison," or to pick it up at the words "good meat." This can be done by using these words in the place of "toho" and the cluck.

CHAPTER IV

Heel and Retrieve.

One of the most important lessons in training, and a lesson to be carefully given and thoroughly learned, is to teach the dog to come to heel promptly, willingly and cheerfully when ordered. It is, perhaps, next in importance to toho, for upon these two lessons depends the absolute control of the dog by his master. The importance of being able to bring the dog in to heel and keep him there will be at once thoroughly appreciated by anyone who has endeavored to take his dog through the crowded streets of a strange city. Everything is new and interesting to the dog; he is continually tempted to stray away from his master to investigate sounds and appearances with which he has never before come in contact. Strange dogs are constantly seeking his acquaintance and endeavoring to draw him away. The surging stream of traffic, the bewildering number of horses and conveyances of all kinds, the foot passengers treading in dangerous proximity to his toes, all tend to distract him and cause him to forget for the moment his fealty to his master. What pleasure it is in such an instance to be able to move rapidly along, knowing that your dog is safe at your side and that nothing will tempt him to leave it! Also, when in the field and attempting to crawl up on a flock of ducks or geese, and you must have your dog with you, how much it adds to the prospect to know that you need have no fear of your dog running out ahead of you or in any other manner frightening the game, and to

know that he will be ready for duty close to your side, when called upon! Fully appreciating the advantages of these and many other instances where this lesson would come in play, I proceeded cautiously with Chic's lessons in coming to heel. Thanks to her previous learning, however, she was now so far advanced that she picked up anything I chose to teach her very readily.

After preparing her supper one evening in full view of her eager eyes, I took it out on the back porch, and to her great astonishment and chagrin left her behind. When I returned she was sitting in the middle of the floor with her head turned slightly to one side, her ears pricked up and her whole expression one of surprise and incredulity. Snapping the cord to her collar I opened the door and said "come." She came with a jump, of course, but when she had got a few feet in front of me I tightened up on the cord and drew her back to my side, at the same time saying quietly "heel." Of course she did not know what all that meant, but by this time she was wise enough to know that all that preparation meant something, and after one or two attempts to go ahead she walked quietly along at my side. I walked directly out to where her supper was ready, and when she saw that she made another slight attempt to get at it, but I held her firmly by the cord and repeated the command. When she became quiet again I loosed the cord and clucked to her, as the signal that she might have the food. This lesson was repeated only at supper time for three or four days, and by that time she had learned to go quietly along at my side whenever she received the command to heel. Then I took her out of doors and had the cord in my pocket ready for use, but to my intense gratification I found it was not necessary. She remained at heel perfectly.

I forgot to say that the command was always accompanied with a motion of the hand made by extending the arm downward at full length, the palm

of the hand backward, and a motion of the hand backward.

Like the other lessons this lesson was gradually extended, that is the time of keeping her at heel was gradually extended, until she learned the lesson so thoroughly that she would not think of leaving until she was given permission, either by the command to "go on" or by clucking. Neither did it take long for her to recognize the motion of the hand, and when I thought she had it sufficiently learned I got into a buggy and took her out for a run. When out of the city I called to her to heel. At first she did not seem to understand, but when she caught sight of the motion she came immediately in and ran contentedly under the buggy. She learned this lesson easier and more quickly than any other, and I have many times had reason to congratulate myself on having her obey the command so readily and cheerfully. If your dog is not a good fighter this command will save him many a trouncing when you are passing the house of some farmer, whose shepherd dog is more quarrelsome than hospitable.

I have seen this command taught by simply putting on the cord and then taking a little switch and going out with the dog for a walk, and every time the dog attempted to run out in front switch him lightly on the nose. This way, however, while effective, has a tendency to cow the dog. He associates the command with the whip and when ordered to come in will come in a cringing manner, as though he expected a whipping.

Many trainers do not teach their dogs to retrieve. They give many and various reasons for this, but I believe that the chief one is that the dog will soon learn to love retrieving so much that the instant a bird falls he will want to rush forward to retrieve it, and also that his love for retrieving will interfere with his desire to find birds and point them. I do not think that there is anything in either objection.

As to the first I am satisfied that a dog properly trained will never break shot, as rushing after a dead or crippled bird without waiting for the command is called. As to the second, if a dog is a thoroughly good dog and hunts from the love of it and points naturally, I do not believe that any added educational accomplishment, such as retrieving, will in any manner detract from his good work in other respects. However that may be if a man only has one dog, can perhaps only afford one dog, and wants him to be a good "all-round" dog, he wants him to retrieve. In teaching this accomplishment a diversity of means may be employed. Many dogs are natural retrievers, so called, and need scarcely any teaching. Many dogs are taught to retrieve by playing with them, throwing a ball or a stick for them to bring. The trouble with dogs taught in this way is that nearly all of them will retrieve as long as they feel like it, and when they tire of it they will go and lie down. And why shouldn't they? If they are taught to bring things as a matter of sport merely, why shouldn't they refuse to bring them when it ceases to be sport any longer?

I never allowed Chic to think that the lessons were given in sport or play. The times of play were another matter, but when the time of the lesson arrived she soon learned that it meant business, and that she must attend strictly to it. First I took a ball of twine, a handkerchief or rag tied up in a knot will do just as well, and calling Chic up to me I turned her head from me and bade her "sit!" At the same time I put my hand on her haunches and gently pressed them down until she came to a sitting position. Then I opened her mouth and gently inserted the ball, being careful not to hurt her lips. Then grasping her muzzle just enough to keep her from dropping the ball, but still being very careful not to hold it tight enough to hurt her, I said quietly: "Hold it!" Having held it for an instant I said: "Drop it!" and instantly let go of her mouth and held my hand to catch

the ball. This was really three lessons in one, namely: "Sit," "Hold it" and "Drop it." If done carefully and kindly I think these three lessons can be given together in the manner stated above and a great deal of time saved thereby. These lessons, as in all the preceding ones, were repeated day after day, and often several times a day, and the time of the lesson gradually lengthened. When she would sit for ten minutes and hold the ball and not drop it for any manner of coaxing, or for any meat or other food placed tantalizingly before her until she received the command to drop it, I considered her ready for the next step. This was to "pick it up."

I took the same ball, to which she had now become accustomed, and tied a little piece of meat to it. I had another piece of meat ready in my hand. I then threw the ball across the room, after first letting her smell of the meat, and made her draw on it as in the manner shown in the lesson on toho! When ready to have her pick it up I clucked to her as in the toho lesson and at the same time said sharply: "Pick it up!" The instant she had it in her mouth I exclaimed: "Toho! Hold it!" True to her former lessons the little beauty stood as if transfixed, and made no effort to eat the meat. I then walked over to her, gave the command to sit, and then to drop it, and immediately gave her the extra piece of meat, which she received with every indication of grateful surprise. Only a few lessons of this kind were necessary before the cluck was dispensed with and she picked up the ball readily at the command. The piece of meat was then removed from the ball and she picked it up as readily as though the meat were still there.

The next and last step was very simple and very readily learned. Throwing the ball across the room as before I sent her on, and when she had the ball in her mouth, instead of walking over to her and taking it from her, I said: "Fetch! Come!" She knew what come meant; she knew she must not drop

that ball until told to, and so, of course, she brought it. When at my feet I said "sit," and she instantly turned around and sat at my feet and looked up at me with her soft, intelligent eyes. Then slowly putting down my hand to take it I said "drop it" and she dropped it into the hand, and immediately received the piece of meat which she knew was awaiting her. The lesson was at last completed; only practice remained, and she got plenty of that.

Day after day it was kept up, the word "come" in connection with "fetch" being soon dispensed with. Then the ball was changed for something else. She was never allowed to chew the article, and after the first two or three attempts to get the meat that was fastened to the ball, she did not attempt it. When I tried something else instead of the ball it made no difference; she worked just as well with a slipper or an old rubber as she did with the ball. Then I began to teach her to distinguish between different articles. Using a slipper for some time I would tell her to bring the slipper, emphasizing the word "slipper." Then a glove was placed on the floor beside the slipper, and if she made a mistake and brought the glove I would say: "Take it back," at the same time pointing to where the slipper still lay. She would go slowly back with it, and when there I would command her to drop it, and then repeat the command to bring the slipper. When this was thoroughly learned I discarded the slipper and used the glove alone until she was accustomed to that. Then the two were placed together again, and she was thus taught to distinguish between them. Then a hat was added—needless to say an old, soft hat. This might have been kept up until she would distinguish almost anything of common use, I suppose, but it takes lots of time and patience and I soon stopped. I should say that this was done in spare moments and was not considered as an essential part of her education.

Having taught her to retrieve at command in the

room she was taken outside. I had no trouble with her here, and, indeed, had expected none. She did as well as in the room.

The next step was to retrieve from water. She had always been fond of the water, going into it of her own accord and splashing around with great delight, although she did not go beyond her depth. I took great care not to do anything to cause her to fear it either, such as throwing her in, throwing water on her, or anything of that sort. Going out with her one day to the edge of a pond I began to throw sticks for her to bring to me. At each throw I sent them a little nearer the edge of the pond, and on about the third throw I sent the stick just into the water far enough to cause her to wet her feet in getting it. She stepped in rather gingerly but brought it. Noticing her hesitation I did not throw it any farther that day, but contented myself with repeating it two or three times. The next day I began where I left off the day before, and after throwing it two or three times so that she would get her feet wet, I threw it a little farther out. This was kept up until she went as far out as she could without swimming, which I considered enough. The next day the same thing was repeated, and when she went that far without hesitation I threw the stick far enough so she would have to swim for it. I calculated it very nicely though and threw it just far enough so she could almost reach it but not quite. Up to this time I had not given a command, but now she waded out just as far as she could, reached unavailingly two or three times and then turned around and looked at me. I instantly motioned her on and said: "Go on." There was no more hesitation, but she at once turned around, made a leap for the stick, which carried her considerably beyond her depth, and turned and brought the stick in. She was caressed and praised and given a piece of a cracker which she did not know I had in my pocket. I sent her out once more that day, but as she was plainly a trifle timid

I did not ask for any more. Indeed, I was more than delighted with the results already so easily attained. This was kept up as in the other lessons, and in a very few days after that she would unhesitatingly go and bring the stick as far as I could throw it. Indeed, she liked it and would run down to a pond when we chanced to pass one and look up at me with a grin and a wag of her tail, plainly asking me to throw in a stick for her. Then I would throw in a stick, and when she was half way back with it I would call to her to drop it and throw in another, and send her back after that. If you have two ducks down and your dog goes out to retrieve and gets the dead one, isn't it nice to be able to make him drop it and turn around and go after the cripple that is getting into the weeds as fast as it can? I think so, and so I taught Chic in this way to drop the stick instantly and watch the motion of my hand for her command what to do. It was easily done after her other lessons. By placing little pieces of meat in different parts of the room and saying: "Find it," I had taught Chic what that meant. I now procured a quail. I do not remember whether I got it from some of the boys who had been out or whether I shot it myself, but inasmuch as it was the open season it does not make any difference. Placing the quail where it would not be in plain sight, and yet would not be too difficult to find I said: "Dead bird! Find it!" She knew what "find it" meant and immediately started to hunt. Coming unexpectedly on the scent of the dead bird she stiffened into a gamy point, but almost immediately her tail began to droop, showing that she recognized the fact that the bird was not alive. "Pick it up" I commanded. She hesitated a barely perceptible moment and then very gingerly took the bird in her mouth. "Fetch" said I, and she promptly brought the bird to me, and without further command sat down in front of me and handed me the bird, but with a plainly astonished and quizzical ex-

pression. Having given me the bird she backed away a few feet and then sat down and looked at me with her ears pricked up, the very personification of a mute, but living, interrogation point. She evidently didn't understand how that dead bird got there. I stroked the feathers of the pretty victim and talked quietly to Chic about it, and then laid it away, and with a few words of approbation gave Chic a piece of cracker. When she was not looking I hid the bird again and repeated the performance as before. My object was twofold. I wanted her to understand what "dead bird" meant, and I wanted to accustom her to the appearance and scent of a dead bird before I took her into the field. Inasmuch as the bird would not last very long I gave her several lessons per day during the three or four days that I could keep the bird, and then I cut off its wings and sewed them together and threw the body away. The wings lasted a long time and served the purpose nearly as well as the whole carcass would have done. When they got too dry I moistened them with a little water.

In this way the lessons proceeded until Chic perfectly understood the meaning of the words "dead bird," and she always enjoyed these lessons, watching me take the wings down from the shelf with the greatest interest, and when I took them into the next room to hide them she displayed the greatest impatience, on my return, to be given the word to hunt them up. I never deceived her, or fooled her. Whenever I said "dead bird" the scent of the dead bird was there and guided her. She knew exactly what she was looking for, and neither gloves, slippers, nor any of her old playthings could distract her from the search. To her credit be it said, too, that she never failed to find them, no matter in what unlikely places they were stowed away. It was amusing to see her nose around places where she had found them at some previous time in the vain hope that she might find them there again.

To say that I was satisfied with the progress my little pupil had thus far made but faintly expresses it. I was delighted with her intelligence and willing obedience, and surprised at the facility with which she learned her later lessons. At the risk of repetition I will say that if the first lessons are carefully, kindly and thoroughly inculcated the facility with which the dog will acquire its future knowledge will be a constant source of surprise and gratification. If, however, the first lessons are taught in an unkind and rough manner so that the dog loses confidence in his instructor, or if they are carelessly impressed and insufficiently learned so that the dog gets the idea that it is of no particular importance whether he does his work well or not, then the process of training will be one long protracted siege of disappointment and discomfort for his trainer, and probably, poor fellow, one dreary stage of punishment for himself. Each lesson will be a trial to both master and pupil, filling the former with disgust, and the latter with fear and pain. Let but the foundation be laid in kindness and affection, the superstructure built with thoroughness and care and the results must be a source of pleasure to the dog and of content and gratification to his master as long as his loved and loving pet shall live to tramp with him the fields and forests, or watch beside the laughing stream from which anon his dear master, with rod and line, brings flashing the beautiful trout.

CHAPTER V

Outdoor Lessons.

Chic's lessons heretofore had been confined almost exclusively to my office. There she was accustomed to everything, and there was nothing to attract her attention or divert her from the business on hand. The principal lesson had been given in the evening, just before her evening meal, for the reason that that was the principal meal of the day, and for the further reason that we were less liable to interruption at that hour. The time had now arrived, however, when we must go out of doors, for the working to whistle, quartering, etc., could not be well taught indoors.

Rising about half past five in the morning I took her out for a walk in the park. San Diego's park is no insignificant affair, being a body of 1,400 acres in one piece and almost wholly unimproved with the exception of a boulevard around it. Here was native sage brush, grease brush, hill and valley, cañon and mesa, in all their virgin dreariness, and the initiated knew where to look for two or three bands of quails. Striking out early in the morning I would walk up to the park, about half a mile, Chic running whither she listed on the way. Arrived there I waited until she crossed in front of me about thirty yards away and gave a short, shrill blast on the whistle. It was an unusual sound and she immediately looked around to see what caused it. Instantly I raised my hand in the signal for "toho" and she came to a stop. Walking up to her I stroked her head

once or twice and sent her on again. This was repeated several times in the course of our walk, and before we went back to town she had her lesson learned, and at the sound of the whistle would stop instantly and wait for further orders. The next lesson was to heel at the sound of the whistle. Waiting, as before, until she should be at a proper distance, that is, within the sound of my voice in case it should be necessary to speak to her, I brought her to "toho" with the whistle. When she looked around I gave a long blast of the whistle with a trill, produced with the tongue, and at the same time beckoned to her to come. She recognized the motion at once and came bounding toward me. When within a few yards of me I motioned her to heel, at the same time saying "heel!" She fell quietly in to heel and trotted along as unconcernedly as though she had always done it. Keeping her at heel for a little way I motioned her to go on, at the same time giving two short, sharp blasts on the whistle. This was all there was to the lesson. It only remained to be repeated until she should associate the long blast with the trill with the command to heel, and the two short blasts with the command to go on. I found, however, that it required a little more time to perfect her in these maneuvers than in the office lessons, for the reason that when she was out in the field running and enjoying herself she was somewhat more loth to mind than when alone with me in the office and nothing else to do but to attend to her lesson.

In all these walks I had a few pieces of cracker or scraps of meat in my pocket with which she was occasionally rewarded when she did well.

At last came the trial that I had longed for. She was industriously hunting back and forth in front of me one morning when, just a few yards in front of her nose, out burst a rabbit. In less time than it takes to read these lines Chic was covering the ground at a pace that bade fair to make the rabbit "hump himself"

for a short distance, but the whistle was in my hand and before she had gone five yards its imperious command to "toho" reached her ears. You who have never trained a puppy of your own and spent hours of patient time and care in the labor cannot appreciate the thrill of gratification with which I saw her plant all four feet in front of her, like a balky horse, and stop so suddenly that she actually slid a few inches on her feet before halting. There she

CHIC AND I—THERE SHE STOOD TREMBLING IN EVERY LIMB.

stood, trembling in every limb, every muscle strained, her head erect and watching the bobbing form of the fleeing game. Oh, she was a picture to delight an owner! Soon the rabbit was out of sight and then she turned her head toward me with a reproachful look, plainly intimating that if it had not been for me that rabbit had been her meat. I whistled her in to heel, but it was a question whether to punish her a little for chasing the rabbit and thus try to teach her that that was wrong, or to praise her for minding so well. In this quandary I did neither, but after keep-

ing her at heel a few minutes I sent her out again. Here is the first instance of the use of the word "toho" and of the whistle in connection with it. If it had not been for this how would I have stopped her from chasing that rabbit? But the importance of this lesson will be made so palpable in future chapters that I will not pause to expatiate upon it now.

Quartering at the motion of the hand was the next step. She had already perfectly learned to toho at one short blast of the whistle and to go on at two short blasts. Sending her on I stopped her when she was going directly away from me at about thirty or forty yards. When she looked around I turned sharply to the right, at the same time motioning in that direction and giving, with the whistle, the command to go on. From the desire that every dog has to go in the general direction that he sees his master going she immediately turned and went on in a direction corresponding with my own, that is, almost at a right angle to the direction in which we had been going. After a short walk in this direction I again stopped her and then, with a motion to the left, I started off in that direction, at the same time giving her, as before, the signal with the whistle to go on. This was kept up for several mornings and when I thought she understood the motion I tried it without turning and going in that direction myself. That is, after stopping her, I motioned to the right and whistled her on, but did not turn to the right myself. She immediately started off to the right, but casting her eyes toward me saw that I was not going in that direction and so changed her course for straight ahead again. She was immediately stopped with the whistle and again motioned to the right and I walked a few paces in that direction myself and then turned and went straight ahead again. She then went on about forty yards in that direction and turned and came back, crossing my path about forty yards ahead of me and going toward my left. As she crossed she looked toward me and I motioned

her toward the left, the direction in which she was going, and she kept straight on. When she had gone about forty yards in that direction I whistled again, but this time not with my metal whistle, but through my teeth. I had about exhausted the various possibilities of the metal whistle and now resorted to one of nature's furnishing for my final signal. The whistle, being new and unexpected, had the desired result; she merely looked around but did not stop. When she looked, however, I motioned toward the right. She did not immediately comprehend and was brought up instantly with a round turn by the "toho!" Then, giving her the command with the whistle to go on, I again motioned to the right, and this time she went away perfectly.

Day after day I went with her in the early morning to the park and repeated these lessons until she had learned them perfectly and I could work her by vocal commands if within hearing, by whistle or motion of the hand if without the sound of the voice. "What nonsense," says someone. "What an endless labor," says another. Not nonsense, my friend, nor endless labor either. My labors with Chic ended long ago and she is still my hunting chum and daily companion, and it would do you good to go out with me some time and have Chic in the buggy. Then when we came to the mouth of some likely cañon, or some little draw with a clump of bushes at the farther end and a wheat stubble just beyond, I would say: "Go up in there, Chic," accompanied by a snap of the finger and a motion of the hand. When you saw her leap from the buggy and quickly hunt out every likely corner of the draw and then either come back to the buggy or stop at the other end of the draw waiting for orders, or, if perchance there were birds there, see her work cautiously up to them and then hold them while we put our guns together and went to her, you would quickly change your mind and say that the result is fully worth all the trouble.

One lesson more remained before my pupil would be ready to go afield with me. She must stop at the sound of the gun. This was readily learned by pursuing the same tactics as used in teaching her to stop at the sound of the whistle. Chic was never gunshy. Perhaps she might have been if I had taken her out hunting the first thing and shot four drams of black powder over her head. I did not do that. I bought some firecrackers instead. Going out on the back porch I shot off a firecracker and then gave her a piece of soda cracker. A judicious combination of these two kinds of crackers will, I believe, prevent gunshyness, and that is a great deal better than to take chances on having to cure it after a while. When she became accustomed to the firecrackers I took a small pistol, a .22-short, and fired that off in connection with the edible crackers. So when I came to teach her to "toho" at the sound of the gun I had no gunshyness to contend with. I took a .44 Colt's with me and sending Chic on I fired it off when she was only a few paces in front of me. She stopped in surprise and looked around to see what made the noise, when I quietly said "toho." Repeating this a few times I sent her on and when she was about forty yards away and running across so that she could look toward me without stopping, I fired again. As she looked around at the report I raised my hand in the signal for "toho" and she immediately stopped. As in teaching her to "toho" at the sound of the whistle, all that remained now was a little practice and it was not long before she learned to associate the sound of the gun with the command "toho" and would immediately stop.

"What good is all this?" asks some impatient reader. Did you ever have a dog addicted to that accursed habit of breaking shot? Did you ever have one that would, in spite of all you could do, break in and chase? Did you ever see one? Then tell me how is it possible for a dog trained as I have described to acquire either

of these most detestable habits? If your dog is taught to stop immediately at the report of the gun, no matter whether he be close to you or far away, he will not break in, will he? The proposition is its own answer and its eminent practicability and utility render it an absolute necessity. It can now be readily understood why I placed so much stress on Chic's education in the one matter of toho. It can now be seen how that one lesson runs through and has its bearing on all subsequent lessons and how very important it is that the lesson of toho should be so thoroughly learned that the pupil is absolutely perfect in it. All lessons require care, patience and kindness on the part of the master; some will be learned more readily than others, but let the lesson in "toho" be absolutely perfect and not a great deal of trouble can be experienced with the others, and generally the pupil will pick up the other lessons so rapidly as to surprise and delight the amateur trainer.

I cannot do better in closing this chapter, which finishes Chic's preliminary education, or what is usually called "yard breaking," than to give an extract from S. T. Hammond's little work on "Training vs. Breaking." In the few preceding chapters I have not pretended to give in its entirety a treatise on the training of dogs. I have only attempted to describe the method I employed with my own dog and that it was entirely successful can be attested by many who have been in the field with Chic and me. "In all our lessons we have endeavored to impress upon the reader the importance of carefully studying the disposition of the pupil in order that he might intelligently apply their teachings. We have also tried to show the paramount necessity of a very cautious advance at each successive step. Yet so very important a matter do we deem this that we cannot forbear again calling your attention to it, and again cautioning you to use the utmost care in all your lessons and to so manage that your dog shall not become over-trained, for this, although quite

common, is a very serious fault and one that will require a long time to overcome, if, indeed, you can ever quite eradicate it; and in order to secure that cheerful, willing obedience that is so desirable, it will be far better that you should devote plenty of time to the proper development of your pupil, rather than by undue haste to bring him out only partially trained or cowed or disheartened by a too close or too long continued drilling at tasks that should be his delight instead of dread. In perfecting your pupil in his work in the field, great care must be taken that he always performs his work in a faultless manner, and no thought of present enjoyment should induce you to, for an instant, relax that constant surveillance and watchful care that you have bestowed upon him while practicing him at home. There is no more prolific cause of the unsteadiness and disobedience exhibited by so many of the dogs we meet than the overlooking of the little faults that scarcely appear worth noticing. As we have before remarked, anything that is worth doing is worth doing well, and in nothing is this more apparent than in the education of your dog. We don't mean by this that you should be constantly nagging him and breaking his spirit with an incessant repetition of commands, but that when you do give an order you should see to it that it is at once obeyed, and to the very letter."

CHAPTER VI

Distemper.

The time had now arrived to give Chic her initiation in the actual work and sport of bird hunting. I had received her in September; her yard breaking had occupied about four months and she was now, in the latter part of January, about eight months old. The season on quails in California did not then close until the first of March, so I had a little over a month in which to initiate her into the beauties of the sport. The beautiful climate of Southern California renders hunting delightful in almost any month of the year, and especially so in the Winter months. It is true that the best time to start a young dog in the field is in the Fall, when he can work on young birds and when the older birds are not so wild; but with a dog that is carefully and thoroughly yard broken and that has the true hunting spirit the time of the year is not of the greatest importance. I had anticipated no little sport and interest in watching Chic work her first birds, but my hopes and desires were doomed to postponement and came near to being defeated forever. I had planned to go out on a Saturday, when about the Tuesday preceding I noticed that Chic did not have much appetite and seemed listless and nerveless. She didn't care for play; did not want to eat; mouthed her food and only ate a few of the daintier bits. I must confess that I was a little careless in the matter and did not begin to treat her for the trouble as soon as I should. About the third day I noticed some matter at the corners of her eyes and the next morning I found her eyes nearly closed with a yellowish matter. Her nose

was hot and dry, and she now almost entirely refused food. Then I knew that something was wrong and began to take steps to remedy it. For three days I gave her three grains of quinine three times a day. The quinine was given in capsules and was administered without a particle of trouble, but I could see no improvement. I then changed her quarters, putting her in her corner in the closet opening off the office. I had a little gas stove and attached a long rubber tube to it so I could set the stove in the closet. I kept the stove running, but not at full pressure, night and day, regulating it so as to keep the temperature always the same and keeping it rather warm. I then had a druggist compound a mixture so that at each dose of a dessertpoonful she would get four grains quinine, fifteen drops fluid extract eucalyptus, thirty drops spirits niter and one drop fluid extract veratrum veride. This was administered every four hours. At the same time I procured the following prescription: Sulphate of zinc twenty grains, fluid extract goldenseal one ounce, rosewater three ounces, glycerin one-half ounce. I procured a soft small surgeon's sponge and cleansed her eyes carefully with warm water as often as they needed it, gently drawing the lower lid down and getting all the matter out of them, then, with a medicine dropper, putting in four or five drops of the above mixture. This was done as often as the eyes clogged up with matter, which was four or five times daily. Still I could see no improvement, though so far she did not get worse. I then got the following: Vin. ipecac one dram, sulphate of zinc one-quarter dram. This is a very strong emetic, so I took her down in the yard to administer it. I gave her fifteen drops of the mixture and in a very few minutes she threw up sort of a white slime of a ropy consistency. She continued to throw up every few minutes, and in a half hour had got rid of nearly a hatful of the stuff and appeared greatly relieved. She was then taken back to her bed.

The above treatment, without the emetic, was con-

tinued a couple of days longer, and then the medicine was changed and I gave her three grains of quinine in capsules every four hours, beginning at nine o'clock in the morning. This brought the last dose at nine o'clock in the evening and then there was given, in addition to the quinine, five grains of bromide of potassium. The treatment for the eyes was continued as before. I noticed an immediate improvement and indications of a return of appetite. She was very much emaciated and I thought I was going to lose her. She had eaten nothing for a week and now I got some extract of beef and made a little beef tea for her. She lapped up a little of it and looked gratefully at me. I had given her a raw egg every day to support her strength. This was given by breaking the egg in a cup; her mouth was then held open and her head thrown back and the egg poured in, when it would slip down without any trouble. She regained her appetite and strength every day after the administration of the emetic, but very slowly at first. I coaxed her appetite with the beef tea and after a few days I broke a cracker in it.

This was continued and the food increased as her appetite returned, but it was the middle of February before she could get around. Then she was very weak on her hindlegs and would wobble and totter around like a dog with a broken back. She got over this so slowly that I began to fear chorea. I thought the best thing I could do for her was to let nature have a chance to repair some of the damage of the dread disease, and so I asked a friend of mine to take her out in the country with him. He asked me what he should do with her and I told him to give her a box out of doors but under cover, out on his porch, with a good blanket in it; give her a light feed in the morning and all she would eat at night of the scraps from the table and, for the rest of the time, to let her absolutely alone.

The last day of the month but one I went out to see him and took my gun with me. I had heard nothing

from him, and didn't know whether Chic was living or dead. I got off the train and walked over to his house, about an eighth of a mile. I saw nothing of Chic anywhere and my heart sank within me. Now my friend is an Irishman, but his wife is a German and is a whole-souled, big-hearted woman, who is a most excellent cook and is as fond of dogs as she is of seeing her guests eat. On seeing me she threw up both hands and exclaimed:

"Vell! Vell! How you vas, anyvay? Dot tog of yours, is it, eh? Vell I tought dot vas a sick tog! Sick! Humph! He eats more as a dozen togs, but he don't get some fat on him at all! I don't see vat is de matter mit dot tog. I never see a tog eat so much like him unt he stay yust so poor as a rail."

"What does she do?"

"Do? Vy she yust gets up in de morning and yust goes out for a run mit my tog. My tog he vas a bull terrier puppy. Ve call him Bruno. De fust ting Bruno dit ven your dog come here, he yust yumped on your tog unt licked him like anytings till I cum running out unt pulled him off unt licked him goot. Vell, yesterday he tried it again unt Chic he yust turned around unt took Bruno py de neck unt shook him till he ki-yi'd like anyting, unt den Chic he let go unt Bruno he run under de house unt stay dere till I go unt coax him out. Ha! ha! It vas goot to see dot Bruno get some of his own medicines back again."

"But where is Chic now?"

"I don't know. She starts off unt Bruno he runs along pehind, unt he so fat he don't can run so fast, unt he sticks out his tongue, unt ven Chic she runs round, Bruno he yust cuts across unt so he tries to keep in sight of Chic. Unt den ven he can't keep up no longer he yust yelps and den comes home. Unt bimeby Chic he comes home, too. You yust ought to see tose togs eat! Unt Chic he runs down to de lake unt Bruno he runs down, too, unt Chic he runs right into de vater unt Bruno den he yust sits down unt looks at

Chic. Unt you ought to see dem dig out squirrels! Dey runs along unt dey sees a squirrel, unt Chic she almost catches him, unt yust as she goes to grab him down he goes into his hole, unt Bruno he's a long vays pehint. Den Chic he yumps into de hole unt yust digs so fast as he can. Unt Bruno he comes up unt he sticks out his tongue unt lies down. Unt Chic she digs unt digs. Den she yumps out unt Bruno he yumps quick in unt digs unt Chic he lies down unt stick out his tongue. Den ven Bruno he gets tired he yump out again unt Chic he yump in, unt pretty soon dey gets out de squirrel."

"How far away does she go?"

"Oh, she goes vay out on dem hills! I seen her one day on de top of dot first mountain dere," and she pointed to one that must have been four miles from where we stood to the top of it.

I now knew why Chic didn't get fat, and laughed at the good woman's anxiety lest I should think she did not feed my pet enough. Putting away my gun and shooting traps in the room I always used when there, I stepped out on the front porch and looked around. No dogs in sight anywhere. Then I took my whistle and blew the return call as long and loud as I could and waited. After a few minutes I blew again and suddenly saw burst into view on the brow of a hill a half mile away, outlined against the mountains back of her, my beautiful pointer, Chic. She stopped and looked in every direction but did not see me. I then stepped from the porch and walked down to the gate, and when she again looked that way I waved my hand and beckoned. One more glance and on she came. Leaping bushes, bowlders, cactus, ditches, too impatient to go around anything, but came straight toward me and wanted to leap into my arms, but that her teaching forbade. I sat down on the steps and took her beautiful head between my hands and petted her and talked to her, and I think we were the happiest couple at La Presa that day. Just then I heard

a faint yelp and looking up I saw a gray and white brindle object coming over the hill where I had first seen Chic. It was Bruno. And the poor little fellow was so fagged out when he got there that he laid down and looked at me, panting instead of trying to jump all over me as puppies always do. I saw them dig out ground squirrels in the manner so graphically described by Mrs. C—, the next day. I had never allowed Chic to jump up or put her paws on me. When she first tried it as a puppy I would gently put her down again, mildly chiding her. When I found that this did no good, I watched her, and when she jumped up I caught her forepaws in my hands and then stepped, hard enough to hurt, on her hindtoes. A very few of these lessons sufficed to teach her that it was not "good form" to jump up and put her dirty paws on anyone's clothes. Well, I looked her over and she certainly was poor. The hide hung loosely on her, the ribs showed with unusual prominence, the beautiful liver color had faded to a dirty sandy brown, she had stone bruises on her feet and limped a little; two toenails were off and a half-healed scratch on one side showed where she had recklessly encountered a thorn or barbed wire. But she was healthy. There was no trace of distemper, chorea, sore eyes or any other sickness about her. I shut Bruno up in the kitchen for a while and took Chic out by herself and put her through her paces. She had forgotten nothing. She would toho, charge, heel, retrieve, go on, quarter, work to the motion of the hand or to the whistle as well as ever. It was drawing toward five o'clock and I heard the whistle of a cock quail over on the hills. It thrilled me through and through, and I said to Chic:

"Come, puppy, let's go and get one or two of those fellows for breakfast."

CHAPTER VII

First Outing.

Chic merely cocked her head on one side and looked inquisitively at me when I suggested that we go and get a few of those birds for breakfast, but when I went into the house and began to put the gun together she seemed to know that something was afoot and watched every movement with intense interest. When I took out the old skeleton shooting coat that had seen lots of service and was redolent with the smell of game, I let her smell of it. She took two or three good, long whiffs, and then backed away a few paces and sat down with her great eyes wide open, lifting her forefeet occasionally and displaying every sign of impatience. I proceeded slowly, putting shells in my pockets, arranging the whistle where I could get at it handily, and when all was completed I said:

"Want to go hunting, Chic?"

Every time I went hunting after this I used the same words, and at no other time, and she soon learned to dance around and talk as plainly as I could desire, expressing her eagerness for the sport. On this particular occasion she merely looked and learned. When everything was ready, I left the house and she immediately started out on a wild run, for nowhere in particular. This was not according to program, so I whistled her in to heel. She came in readily enough but plainly showed that it was irksome to her. We had gone but a short distance when I sent her out. Away she went, ranging far and wide and fast. Again I checked her, and bringing her closer in sent her on

toward a little clump of sagebrush. Going across wind she suddenly wheeled and roaded up toward the bushes. Slower and slower she went until she came to a rigid point. Ah, how delighted I was! How beautiful she looked standing there with her foot raised while a straight-edge could have been laid from the tip of her quivering, sensitive nose to the tip of her tail! I stood for a moment admiring her, when suddenly there was a swish, a zip, and then the whir of a hundred birds as a little gray, brindled object darted into them and then, barking wildly, essayed to catch one of the flying beauties. It was Bruno. He had not seen us go out but had noticed our departure when we were some distance away and had arrived just in time to take part in the sport—and spoil mine. Chic gave one glance at me and then started to show Bruno how to run, evidently firmly believing that she could catch one of those birds and well knowing that Bruno could not. "Toho!" rang out sharp and clear, and she stopped as if struck by lightning. Then the dog whip was unsnapped from my shooting coat and as unlucky Bruno came back from his short run after the quail he received a couple of good cuts from the rawhide. This was sufficient to send him back toward the house ki-yi-ing and also served as a warning to Chic as to what she would get if she ever conducted herself in that manner.

"Here, there! What are you doing to my dog? I want to make a bird dog out of him!"

I looked up and saw my friend and host, Tom, coming up from the lake where he had been at work, with a grin on his face. He had seen the whole performance and knowing the pains I had been at to teach Chic, was enjoying my discomfiture.

"How are you, Tom?" said I, as we shook hands. "What have you been doing?"

"Down at the lake working for the company. When did you come out?"

"On the 3:30. You've been taking pretty good care of

Chic. I don't see any signs of distemper about her now."

"I haven't taken any care of her at all. Just did as you told me to—fed her and let her alone. She's got the making of a great dog, though. I never saw a dog that could run with her and stay as long. She'll run all day. Poor little Bruno It's amusing to see him try to keep up with her."

"What has she been doing all the time?" I asked.

"Chasing rabbits most of the time, I guess," said Tom, as he laughed at the look of consternation that overspread my face.

"Chasing rabbits!" I echoed. "Couldn't you stop her?"

"I didn't try. You told me to let her alone and I did so. I couldn't have stopped her without tying her up, anyhow, and I knew it was the exercise you wanted her to get."

"Well, I've got a job, then," said I, with a sigh.

"Look at her, now," said Tom. "What is she standing there for?"

I looked, and there was Chic standing in the same position that she was in when she stopped at the command of toho. She had ceased looking for the birds, which had flown over the brow of a hill, but was standing there waiting for the next orders. I called her in and we stood and talked a few minutes longer and then Tom shouldered his rake and started for the house saying, over his shoulder, "We'll have supper about seven o'clock."

I had not marked the birds very well and knew that they would now be quite a ways from where they had alighted, for the California quail is quite a runner, so we started on in the general direction that they had taken. When Tom had come up Bruno had run back to us, secure in his master's protection, but he kept his master between him and me all the time, and kept his eye on my whip, for which he had evidently conceived a sudden and wholesome respect. Now he was running

back to the house at Tom's heels although he cast wistful glances at Chic every once in a while.

After going a little way I sent Chic on again. It did me good to see that puppy work. She ranged away and backward and forward like an old dog. To be sure I had to direct her with the whistle. If she was going too far away from me to the right or left, she was checked by the whistle and turned the other way with a motion of the hand. She had not forgotten any of her training, and at the whistle through my teeth instead of the metal whistle, she would turn instantly and quarter back. Suddenly she wheeled into a beautiful point. Her feet spread apart, her tail stiff as iron and her nose pointing back and to the left. It was an awkward position but it made my heart throb with pride. I walked up slowly and cautioned her with a low spoken "toho!" although I do not now believe it was at all necessary. Taking a good grip on my gun I determined that Chic should now see what the gun was for, and, as she had done her part so well, I determined to show her that I could also do mine upon occasion. Walking up slowly I passed in front of her, when out from under my feet burst a meadowlark. What should I do now? During our rambles in the park I had neither petted nor praised her when she pointed a lark. I had pursued the same tactics whenever she pointed a tame chicken. I was fearful that if I should praise her for it she would acquire the habit of pointing larks and tame chickens and sparrows and everything else that she came across. On the other hand if I corrected her I was afraid she would think it was wrong to point and would so come to refuse to do it altogether. I thought it was now time that she quit pointing larks, but still thought it not best to chide her for it until after she had had more work on game birds to see if she would not then quit it of her own accord. Whenever I had had occasion to punish Chic for anything I had said to her "Shame on you." From this she had learned that these were not words of commendation

and praise, but quite the reverse, and they many a time answered the purpose of a whipping.

When the lark got up I knew by the general relaxation in all of Chic's muscles, and from her dropping the point, that she had been holding the lark. I merely said "Shame on you" and walked on. She dropped her ears and looked quite crestfallen, but when I clucked to her to go on she went away as merrily as ever. By this time we had got over the brow of the hill over which the birds had disappeared, and I looked the situation over. I found in front of me quite a wide and deep cañon. At the bottom was a dry run, or a creek bed where the water ran in the Winter but at no other time of the year. Along this were a few stunted scrub oak and mesquite bushes, and on the banks the grass was long and dry. I expected to find the birds either in the bottom of the ravine or on the other side. When quails fly over a hill they rarely light on the side of the hill just over the brow, but unless their previous flight has been long they will almost invariably cross the ravine and alight on the side hill opposite the one over which they have just come. If the ravine or cañon is wide and not very deep they will sometimes alight in the bottom if there be good cover there. So down into the ravine we went and, sure enough, Chic came to a stand away up to the left and near the head of the draw. I toiled up there, watching her carefully all the while, but there was no need, for she didn't offer to stir, and I finally came up to her. I expected to find about half the bunch here, for the birds seldom scatter very much on the first rise. I walked in front of her a few paces but nothing got up. She was pointing directly up the wind. I went back to her and spoke quietly to her. "Go on. Careful." Cautiously she lifted first one foot and then the other. Then she crouched and crept on like a great cat about to spring on its prey. Then she stopped again in firm point. I was prepared to see birds but I was not prepared for what I did see. As I walked up to her the second time

there was a rush and roar like a Niagara and up into the air went a great cloud of blue beauties. There must have been at least two hundred of them and they were fully thirty yards from where Chic had made her first stand. I was somewhat rattled, I must confess, and committed the unpardonable blunder of firing my first barrel blindly at the flock, or "on the band," as Californians say. It seemed as if I ought to have

"GO ON; CAREFUL!"

killed a dozen at least, but of course I did not get a feather. I steadied down with the second barrel and, holding well onto a straggler that was going dead away at about thirty yards, I let him have it and he fell in a heap. I know it is not a good practice to let a puppy retrieve dead birds his first season, and especially at his first lesson. It is apt to make him unsteady and too eager to get the bird; is apt to make him believe

that retrieving is more important than finding. But the temptation was too great. I knew the bird was dead and he had fallen in plain sight, and Chic was so eager to go. She had not offered to stir at the sound of the gun. How could she when she had been carefully taught that at the sound of the gun she must stop? After watching the birds and seeing some of them settle on the mesa, as the flat top is called, I said to her: "Dead bird!" She was away like the wind straight to the spot where the bird had fallen, but when she was within a few yards of it, I called: "Toho!"

Then walking up to her I said: "Steady now. Dead bird! Find it!" Instantly her nose went to the ground and she began hunting most industriously. By this time I saw the bird and, watching her closely, the moment I saw that she had got scent of it, I called: "Toho!" She instantly straightened out into a point and I went up to the bird, picked it up, showed it to her, allowed her to smell it, stroked its feathers and called it "nice bird," and in every way tried to impress upon her that these birds were to be handled gently and not roughly. She was so eager to go on after others, however, that I am afraid she didn't care much how I handled the birds. But I knew that these tactics, persevered in, would have a good effect and so kept it up for about five minutes. Then I let her see me put the bird in my pocket and sent her on again. By this time she seemed to know what was wanted and had marked the birds as well as I had myself.

Straightaway she went for about sixty yards and wheeled into as pretty a point as one need ever see. I walked up to her and just as I got to her and was getting ready to shoot, to my great astonishment she made a wild spring forward and actually attempted to catch the bird which was lying so snugly hidden in a clump of long grass. It was a great temptation, to be sure, for the bird was only about eighteen inches from her nose, and, besides, she had held it while I was walking fully sixty yards to her. Of course she

must hold them for hours, if necessary, after a while, but she was only a puppy then. Nevertheless, with these excuses in her favor, she had hardly touched the ground in her wild leap, when the cruel lash wound around her and made her howl with pain. My whip is a three strand, braided rawhide, with a good handle. It has a snap on the handle, and in the field is always snapped to a ring sewed on the right hand side of my shooting coat, so it is always convenient. Once more the whip rose and fell, and at the same time I said scornfully: "Shame on you! Shame! Shame!"

"Don't hit me again," she pleaded pitifully. "I forgot; indeed I did. I will never do it again."

Although the voice was not quite human, yet every look and action which accompanied the plaintive appeal was so expressive that her meaning could not be misunderstood. I was angry, too, which was an additional reason for not whipping her any more.

I knew that we were now among some dozen or so of birds which had gone down near where we stood and so I sent her on, but with the caution: "Steady! Steady!" She slowed down and was soon feeling a scent. Cautiously she worked up to it and soon came to a point. I walked up and as the bird rose and flew to my right another rose at the same time and flew, quartering to the left. I made a pretty double and marked the first bird down near a little tuft of grass longer than that surrounding it. The second fell as though it were crippled, and if Chic had had a year or two of experience instead of being on her first outing. I would have sent her after it at once. As it was, I merely said: "Steady! Go on," and sent her away again, leaving the first bird shot for future reference. A few yards on she pointed again and I scored a beautiful miss. Chic was too interested to make any of the impertinent remarks that she afterward got into the habit of making when I missed an easy shot. After this it was point and shoot, point and shoot, with great regularity, until I had twelve or fifteen birds in

my pockets and twilight was fast falling. We had hunted all the time in the vicinity of where I had left the bird that fell near the bunch of grass and now, as we started homeward, I sent her in that direction. She soon got scent of it, drew up to it and pointed, and then, as if to tell me that there was something wrong about it, she looked toward me, half dropped her tail, wagged it a little, and then resumed her point. "Dead bird," said I.

She looked at me with a disgusted expression that plainly said: "Well, don't you suppose I know it's a dead bird?"

"Pick it up," I commanded, and in an instant she had the dead bird in her mouth. "Fetch!" and she came trotting toward me, her luminous eyes fairly beaming with delight, squared herself around in front of me and sat down, tipped her head back and held the quail up for me to take. She did it fully as well as she ever did in the office when taking a lesson, and how I did love her for it. I took the bird from her, petted her and praised her, and she frisked around and exclaimed, "Ain't I a dandy?" and "Didn't I do that well?" in half a dozen different ways. Then we started for home. It was getting too dark to shoot and I let Chic run at will while I took a bee line across the hills and valleys for the house. As I was trudging along reviewing the good and bad work of the day, but on the whole rather well pleased, I saw a flash of something white across the path a little in front of me.

"What was that?" Quick came the mental answer: "Chic after a rabbit." My whistle was in my pocket and I couldn't get at it. In less time than it takes to read these words the safety was shoved up, and, without taking the gun from my shoulder I pulled the trigger. I knew she would stop at the report, and so I started in the direction in which she had been going. This rabbit business had got to be stopped. If she had got into that habit while out there alone it was unfortunate—for her. Walking up to her I gave her one

cut with the whip, not a very hard one, but just a reminder, and saying, "Shame on you! Heel!" we started for the house again and she went all the way at my heel, having plenty of time to feel her disgrace and to reason out what it was for. Arrived there we did such justice to Mrs. C—'s good supper as only hungry hunters can. After supper a good pipe, then the gun was cleaned, a bumper of Tom's native wine was quaffed and bed was sought to be up early ready for the morning's shoot. My hunting coat was folded up and Chic curled herself up comfortably on it and slept the sleep of the just at the side of my bed.

CHAPTER VIII

La Presa.

Don't make the common mistake of Eastern tourists and call this "La Preesa." In Spanish the "e" has the long sound of "a," and consequently the title of this chapter should be pronounced as though it were spelled La Praysa. La Presa is one of the souvenirs of the great "boom" in Southern California. San Diego had, perhaps, a little more than its share of the boom, and for miles in every direction from the city, on the land side, the land could be seen dotted with town lot stakes bearing names of additions, numbers, names of streets, etc. La Presa is about fifteen miles from San Diego, and is picturesquely situated on the banks of Sweetwater Lake. The lake is formed by the big dam built by the San Diego Land and Town Company and is the reservoir which supplies the system of water works and irrigation of that company and furnishes the water supply to National City, a prosperous little city situated on San Diego bay about four miles below San Diego. A vast number of foothills are so conformed as to drain into the little valley which is now Sweetwater Lake, and by building a dam across the outlet of the valley the waters are caused to back up and form a beautiful lake about two miles long by about a mile and one-half wide. This dam is one of the sights always shown to tourists, and is well worth seeing. It is ninety-six feet high, forty-seven feet thick at the base and twenty-five feet thick at the top. I do not remember exactly how long it is, but think it is something like one hundred and seventy-five feet. It is

built in an arch with the bow presented to the pressure of the water, and is composed of solid masonry. The Land and Town Company, locally known as "the company," keep several men at work all the time clearing the water of debris, repairing fences, watching the dam, and various other employments. Tom was one of these men. He was also postmaster, committeeman of one of the political parties, proprietor of the hotel, boss of the section hands part of the time, and boss of the politics of the precinct all the time. The precinct was entitled to one delegate in the convention, and Tom was always chairman of the delegation and saw that it voted unanimously for his friends. And no man ever had a stancher friend in a convention than that same Tom, either. The village consisted of a station, a store, Tom's house, and a rather presumptious building intended for a hotel, but which was seldom occupied.

I first met Tom on an occasion when I went out there duck hunting with Ad. Pearson, and a better hunting companion than Ad. is seldom, if ever, found. I will never forget the time I had that night with my rubber boots. I had bought them the same size as I usually wore in leather instead of a size or two larger, as I should have done, and on this occasion I had been in the water over my boot tops and they were wet inside. Ad. took a pull at them, then Tom took a pull, then I tried it myself. This was kept up for fully half an hour, until I seriously thought that I would either have to sleep in them or cut them off. Finally I laid down on the floor, back up. Tom put one of his feet where it would do most good as a brace and then pulled. Something had to come, and the refractory boot finally yielded. But I digress.

The hills in the east were just graying in the morning light on the day after my first outing with Chic, when I sprang from my comfortable bed and hurried on my clothes. Chic bounced up, yawned once or twice and

watched the preparations with intelligent eagerness. When all was ready I said:

"Want to go hunting, Chic?"

She needed no second invitation, but ran to the door and whined anxiously to be let out. How crisp and invigorating the air was that morning. The heavy dew was rising and created a thick mist which soon disappeared. I struck out for the road, and by the time day had fairly dawned I was a mile away from the house and in the main road. Coming to the dry bed of the creek I branched off and followed it up. There was no water running, but here and there were little pools where the quail came to drink. I saw plenty of signs but no quail. Chic was hunting eagerly but had met with no success as yet. A little way up the creek another road crossed. It was little used, but the soil was of such a nature that there was plenty of dust there, and I expected to come across a bunch of birds dusting themselves in the road, as is their habit in the early morning. Sure enough I had not gone far before I saw ahead of me about fifty of them enjoying themselves to their utmost in the sandy dust. They were about seventy yards from me at a bend in the road, and had not yet discovered me. I forgot the dog and stood watching the innocent diversions of the little creatures whose death was my mission that morning. They scratched and rolled about in the greatest abandon of comfort until suddenly an old cock quail, who was perched upon a bush as a sentry, gave a shrill call. Instantly every bird was on the alert, and with heads erect and bright eyes looking to every side for the danger, they marched off the road. Another call from the sentry and he took wing, the whole band following him. I may as well say here, parenthetically, that in California every aggregation of animals or birds is called a band. There are no bevies of quails, flocks of ducks, herds of cattle or droves of sheep. All are called bands. I watched the band as they sailed over the small brush, and saw

them all settle on the farther side of a small draw about eighty or ninety yards away. They had not been badly frightened and did not fly far. Then I looked for Chic. She was nowhere to be seen. Should I whistle for her or should I go look for her? I decided on the latter, and taking a careful survey of the ground where the birds had settled, marking it well, I started in the direction where I had last seen her. On I went over the hills and through the draws until I had gone farther than I had any idea she was, but no dog. Then I quartered the ground, looking everywhere. At last in despair, I blew the whistle. I had hardly done so when I caught sight of her far up on the hillside, making a beautiful stand. She heard the whistle and slowly turned her head toward me and then slowly turned it back again and resumed her point. My heart leaped, and I congratulated myself on having such a magnificent puppy. As I toiled on up to where she was standing I thought how lucky it was for Wun Lung, Rip Rap and the rest of the phenomenal dogs that they hadn't had a Chic to run against when they made their great records. It was a long way up there and I was well winded when I arrived, but was more than repaid by seeing my lovely pet hold her point so steadily. Taking a few moments for a breathing spell, I advanced to put up the birds when out from in front of me scuttled a cotton-tailed rabbit! A horrible fear seized me and I looked around at Chic. Sure enough! There she stood wagging her tail and watching the fleeing bunny with great interest and an evident desire to chase, but her experience of the night before deterred her. I was disgusted and angry, but what could I do? It was the last day of the season and I hoped that before next season she would outgrow such nonsense. Besides I did not yet want to punish her for pointing anything, for fear, as previously stated, she might get the idea that she ought not to point at all. So I only said: "You little fool! Shame on you! Heel!" and

throwing the gun over my shoulder I started off down the hill with Chic at my heels—a very crestfallen and disappointed dog.

I went straight to the place where I had marked the band that I had disturbed at their morning ablutions in the dust. I sent Chic out and she hunted hard and faithfully. We quartered back and forth, hunted up hill and down, looked in all the likely places, but that band had disappeared as completely as though swallowed up in the bowels of the earth. The sun was now peering at me over the mountains and it was getting warm. It was discouraging. It was now time, however, for the birds to be feeding, and I knew of a place the other side of the highest peak where there was a fine patch of sage and a bunch of wild grape vines growing up over the side of a steep hill. I went growling along, anathematizing poor Chic for her nonsense about that rabbit which had so completely spoiled some nice sport when, on looking up, I was electrified to see her stanchly pointing. A few yards in front of her was a little clump of bushes, and looking on the ground underneath I saw a half dozen or so quails scurrying into the smaller grease brush with which the ground was covered. One of the greatest troubles in hunting California quails with a dog is that they will not lie for the dog until they have been well frightened. Chic had undoubtedly winded these birds and roaded up to them. She could not see them, and was fully ten yards from them, and yet they had either seen her or me and were running away. The scent must soon inevitably disappear, and the puzzled dog, if new to the business, is liable to spring forward in an attempt to regain the scent and thus flush the birds. I was near enough to caution Chic, and as she put her foot down with the disappearing scent I said "careful!" Inch by inch and then foot by foot she went forward and then stopped again. It was no use; the birds would not wait. So I walked rapidly up and flushed them. On the rise I got one with each

barrel and watched them sail away and drop, apparently just over the brow of a little hill. One of the birds had fallen dead in plain sight and I walked over and picked it up. The other one I could not find and so called to Chic, who had stood since the sound of the gun, wagging her tail, heedless of the bushes that it rapped, waiting for orders. She came bounding toward me and went so directly to the dead bird that I was convinced she had marked its fall, and, at the command, retrieved it for me.

I may say here, in passing, that during this day and also during her next season's work, I never ordered her to retrieve a bird that I could find myself. In this way I saved the puppy from overwork and also shunned the danger of tiring her of any part of the sport.

Starting on after the birds Chic came to a sudden stand on a straggler who thought he was smart enough to hide and had not flown with the rest of the band. I stood for a moment and watched her, for I knew what she had. How beautiful she was—just the faintest quiver at the tip of her tail, and the rest of her body as though carved in stone! A scarcely perceptible twitching of her sensitive lips and her lovely brown eyes almost starting from her head with pleasurable excitement!

"Chic!"

Not a muscle moved.

"Chic!" a little louder. About half a wag of the tail was the only sign that she had heard me. Having surfeited myself with the sight I moved on, flushed the bird and missed him with both barrels! She watched him over the brow of the hill where his companions had disappeared, then dropped her tail and gave me a disgusted look and exclaimed:

"What are those old gaspipes of yours for anyway? Or are you cross-eyed this morning?"

I patted her head and apologized, for I felt heartily ashamed of myself, and she soon recovered and went

on as cheerfully as ever. Arrived at the brow of the hill I felt satisfied that the wary birds had only pretended to drop there, and that I should find them on the farther side of the little draw that intervened. Going up the hill for the double purpose of getting the slight breeze that was now springing up, and also of driving the birds, when they should flush again, down toward the more level places where it would be easier hunting, we crossed over the draw, and came down on the other side. The bands do not generally separate very much on the first flush, and do not even then lie very well to the dog, and so I expected that most of them would rise together. About three-quarters of them will usually rise in a bunch on the second flush, leaving the balance scattered, but on the second flush those that rise together will scatter, sometimes to all four quarters of the compass, and when they then settle, being thoroughly frightened, will lie as well as any birds. The birds had settled on the side of the hill but had run up to the top, and Chic soon had them pinned. As I expected fully three-quarters of the band rose together and flew off down the hill toward the level ground, scattered well and lit where they would be easily found. Chic still held her point and I walked up and flushed and killed. At the sound of the gun two more birds rose to my left and I got one of them. Throwing open the gun the shells were ejected and two more shoved in and the gun closed just in time to cover a little fellow who was putting space between himself and danger as fast as his swiftly beating wings would let him. At the crack of the gun he tumbled and I turned hastily and missed a swift right quarterer. Again the gun was hastily breeched and loaded and again just in time. Two birds were leaving that perilous vicinity as though sent for, one going straight away, and the other a left quarterer. Twice the little Smith cracked and two more birds were added to the score. This made five birds without moving out of my tracks. Do

not think that I had forgotten Chic all this time. Each time I loaded I cast my eyes on her, but it was unnecessary. Every crack of the gun was a command to her to toho, and she obeyed unwaveringly. I now had breathing time and patted her glossy head a couple of times and said "good puppy." Starting to retrieve I put up two more birds, one of which I bagged and one got away. Three of the birds I found myself; the others Chic found for me.

Moving on down the wind and down the slight hill we soon got into the now well scattered and thoroughly frightened birds. Chic behaved admirably, and we worked out the ground thoroughly with the result of adding eight more birds to the pockets of my shooting coat. Sixteen birds out of one band was doing pretty well for me, and as the sun was getting high and was beginning to make itself felt we concluded to go to the house. The year before, on this same ground, shooting with Ad. over his little brown dog, whose name I have forgotten, I made my first run of eight straight, and I well remember how proud of it I was.

As I went musing along a shadow crossed the ground at my feet, and I looked up and saw a great hawk sailing around looking for his breakfast. I make it a point when out with the gun to kill every bird or creature which I know to be instrumental in destroying game birds or their eggs. Many a time I have gone out of my way to put a quietus to the murderous propensities of a hawk or an owl, and have often shot the former when I knew the report of the gun would frighten some game that I was after. If all sportsmen would hunt the game destroyers with as much avidity as they do the game itself there would not be such a scarcity of good shooting. In this particular instance I regretted that the two loads of number twos which I invariably carried had been left at the house, and that Mr. Hawk was too far away to be reached with the eights I was using on the quails. Even as I reflected a quail, which had straggled from some band, burst out from in front

of me. Instantly the gun was at my shoulder, and when the quail was about twenty-five yards away he tumbled in a heap. But he did not reach the ground—that is, not then. The hawk had been as quick as I, and, although the bird was killed by the gun, he had not fallen two feet toward the ground before he was

SHE SHOOK IT IN THE MOST APPROVED RAT TERRIER FASHION.

in the talons of the bird of prey. The second barrel cracked and I had the satisfaction of seeing the hawk tumble headlong to the ground. Walking up I finished him with my heel and disengaged the quail from his talons and placed it with its companions in my shooting coat, Chic had been ranging out and had stopped at the sound of the gun. I motioned her in and started on. Coming up to the hawk she concluded that I had

forgotten something and started to pick it up. The hawk had just enough vitality left to close his ugly claws around Chic's nose, and a more surprised dog you never saw. A yelp caused me to look around just in time to see her shake him off. She backed away a couple of steps and looked at that hawk with every appearance of the utmost astonishment. Then rage seemed to get the better of her surprise and she bounced on him, seized him and commenced to shake him in the most approved rat terrier fashion. A regular monkey and parrot time was in lively progress, but I, fearing that this might cause her to be rough in retrieving, quickly called her off. She was about to explain that she didn't propose to be used in that style by any such birds as that, but I quieted her, well pleased with her show of spirit, and we soon arrived at the house. Breakfast was then in order, and maybe those quails killed the evening before didn't taste good! Then the gun was cleaned and Chic and I enjoyed a well earned rest.

CHAPTER IX

Retrieving from Water.

The sun was slowly sinking behind the western hills, the beautiful lake brilliantly reflecting his slanting beams, when Chic and I again sallied forth accompanied by Little Nell, for a short ramble. Little Nell, as I have before explained, was a beautifully finished L. C. Smith ejector of the $180 grade. It is needless to say that she was as indispensable to my enjoyment, when on a hunt, as Chic herself. Walking down toward the lake I let Chic run at will, and most merrily did she go. There was no trace of fatigue, no signs of distemper or illness of any sort, but I smiled at her lean and gaunt appearance so greatly in contrast with her usual form. Following on around the border of the lake it occurred to me that if I could get a duck it would be a good opportunity to give Chic her first lesson in retrieving a dead bird from the water. There were no ducks to speak of, but here and there a few ruddy ducks would swim out away from the bank on my approach. We did not consider these ducks as very good birds for the table and consequently never shot them except when "out of meat" or for some other particular purpose. Their safety from pursuit made them quite tame and we had not gone far when one little fellow, lagging behind his fellows, made a good mark at about forty yards. Calling Chic in I brought Little Nell to bear on the duck and as her clarion voice rang out the duck turned over on his back and seemed to give up the ghost. It was only seeming, however, for these birds can carry

off a large amount of shot and especially of the small quail shot that I was using, and this one, almost instantly recovering from the shock of the charge, attempted to make off. He was hard hit, however, and when I gave him the second barrel he made no further progress, but his convulsions took him round in a small circle, fluttering and flopping. Gradually his struggles ceased and he lay still upon the water.

Chic, at my side, had been an interested spectator and I fully expected that at the command she would jump in and retrieve. Imagine my disgust then, when I said "dead bird," at seeing her look up in astonishment and then wheel and dash off up the hill, frantically searching in the brush for the dead quail. An instant's reflection, however, convinced me that this was only natural, for hitherto a dead quail was the only dead bird to which she had had any sort of an introduction. Calling her back, I repeated the command, at the same time motioning toward the dead duck. She looked at it in wonder but made no attempt to get it. Then I picked up a pebble and threw it into the water near the duck. I should explain that when I said the duck was forty yards away, I meant that it was forty yards from where I stood when I shot. It was only about twelve or fifteen yards from the bank where we now stood. Throwing the pebble seemed to open Chic's eyes, for I had often done that before when calling her attention to a stick that I wished her to get. She looked, and seeing something floating on the water, immediately plunged in and swam toward it. Arrived there she punched her nose against it, took a good whiff of it and turned to come back.

Now I realized the value of the pains that I had taken in her retrieving lessons. If she had only retrieved for me in play my task would now have been well-nigh impossible. As it was I only said "dead bird; pick it up!" She at once, though reluctantly, took the bird in her mouth, but she evidently did not like the taste of it for she immediately dropped it again. "Pick it

up," commanded I, sternly, and then, when she had got it fairly in her mouth, I ordered "fetch!" She came swimming in with it, but no sooner had her feet touched the ground than she dropped the bird, shook herself and ran up to me. This was not according to my idea of retrieving from water and so, instead of the praises she expected, she got her ear pinched a little. Not very hard, though, for she had done first-rate, but just enough to let her know that it was not quite all right. Motioning toward the bird, I again commanded "dead bird; fetch!" and this time there was no misunderstanding and no hesitation. She ran to the duck, picked it up and brought it to me willingly, squared herself around in front of me and sat down holding up the bird for me to take. Then she was petted and praised, and when I stepped to the bank to throw the bird in again she watched me with as much eagerness as if we were playing with the sticks of which she used to be so fond, and as I swung the bird out into the lake she watched it closely and at the command, "dead bird; fetch," she sprang in without hesitation, brought in the bird and sat down and held it up for me as though she had done nothing else all her short life. The lesson was learned and how simple, easy and satisfactory it all was after her careful, thorough and systematic yard and house breaking. What a pleasure it was to feel that, with so little labor, I had a dog that would retrieve from land or water and that, hereafter, no poor, sorely wounded and half dead birds could straggle off into the weeds or brush to suffer hours of agony before death should mercifully relieve their sufferings. For to the hunter with a spark of humanity in his breast, it is a sorrow unspeakable to see a bird drop evidently so badly wounded that it will be impossible for it to live, and then be unable to find it. I know that, for myself, many an evening of pleasant reflection over the pleasures of a successful day has been sadly marred by the memory of that poor cripple, perhaps even then suffer-

ing from the wound I gave. What a queer combination is man, for he will kill and yet pity the creature that he kills; yes, even pity while he kills. But so it is.

"Life evermore is fed by death,
In earth and sea and sky,
And that a rose may breathe its breath
Something must die."

Having given me the duck so beautifully, Chic immediately started on a wild run, made a circle of about thirty yards, came back and leaped up, exclaiming: "That duck business is all right for you and for spaniels, but give me these little blue beauties that I can smell and road and point. I love their delicate perfume! I love the rush and roar of their swiftly beating wings! I love to have them try to hide where I can't find them! Let's go and get some more quails." Chic is not much of an orator but her language is plain enough to me and I can swear that that is what she wanted to say and I understood it, for, to tell the truth, I more than half agreed with her. Considering that I had given her water lessons enough for the first time I let her have her way and we struck off up over the hill for the brush.

We had not gone far when a rabbit jumped out almost under Chic's nose. Instinctively she made a couple of leaps and then, before I could whistle or call, she stopped short, watched the rabbit out of sight, turned to me with a wag of her tail and resumed her hunting. With her former training it was not such a hard task to break her of rabbit chasing, after all. The ground was rough and uneven and part of the time Chic was out of my sight. Plodding along, with my mind on other things, I suddenly met with a most startling incident. I felt my foot strike on something soft and at the same instant heard the terrible warning of a rattlesnake. Fortunately I did not jump, but seemed frozen in my tracks for there, right under my foot, squirmed the ugly monster. Fortu-

nately I had stepped on his neck about three inches back of the head, and he could not strike. He raised his ugly body, and, like a flash, twined it about my leg. A sudden faintness came over me and I felt that if I should attempt to raise my other foot to crush his head, I would fall or at least stagger, and thus give him an opportunity to strike. The imminence of the danger brought me to myself; and carefully bringing down the gun, I put the muzzle right onto the head of the snake and blew him into kingdom come. This done I raised my foot, when the convulsions of the dead reptile caused his bloody trunk to flop around my leg in the most hideous fashion. Disengaging it I felt so unnerved that for a few minutes I could not go on. Great drops of sweat broke out over me and I felt as if I did not care to hunt any more that day. If you have never had a live rattlesnake twined about you then don't attempt to criticise me for being timid, for you don't know how it feels. I was about to whistle for Chic and start for the house, when I looked up and saw her on the brow of a little hill, in a most beautiful point. Hardly recovered from the effects of my fright, nevertheless the sight inspired me and I hastened up to her. Stanchly she held it and I moved up, flushed and missed with both barrels. Thoroughly disgusted, and it being quite dusk, I started for the house, letting Chic run at her own sweet will by the way while I kept a sharp lookout for rattlesnakes and, of course, saw none.

After a good supper and a smoke I took my gun apart and started to clean it. Tom came in with his pipe. Chic curled up on my shooting coat oblivious to Bruno's attempts to coax her to play.

"What kind of a gun is that?" asked Tom.

"An L. C. Smith ejector," replied I.

"You seem to think as much of it as you do of Chic."

"Almost."

"Do you clean it every time you come in from a shoot?"

"Certainly."

"Lots of trouble, ain't it? What do you do it for?"

"To keep it in shape. You see, if you let a gun stand with the residue from the burnt powder in it, the barrels will become pitted."

"What's that?" asked Tom.

"Why," I replied, "the polish on the inside of the barrels will wear off in little round spots, and these grow deeper into little holes or pits."

"What causes that?"

"The combustion of the powder generates a kind of chemical which acts on the highly polished surface of the inside of the barrel and destroys the polish. It is the same as an acid which eats into the polished surface."

"Does that injure the shooting qualities of the gun?"

"Many fellows say it does not. I have even known some who let their guns become pitted purposely, claiming that they shot better after it. It does not seem reasonable to me, though. If the inside of the barrel is rough it certainly increases the friction of the shot in its passage out of the barrel and, to some extent, decreases the penetrative force. It is probably not much, but it is at least some. Then again it seems to me that if the inside of the barrel is rough it will tend to deflect the shot from their course and thus injure the pattern. I don't suppose the difference in either point is very great but it is enough so that it pays to avoid it. Then, again, if you keep your gun in good shape it will bring a better price if you wish to sell it."

"Guess you don't want to sell your gun, do you?"

"Sell Little Nell! Not much!"

"Little Nell! Is that what you call your gun? Great name for a gun. I suppose you named it that so you could imagine you had a girl with you all the time, eh? Just like an old bachelor," was Tom's comment.

"Do you think that's the best make of guns?" he continued.

"Of course I do. Did you ever see a man yet who didn't think he had the best gun in the world?"

"Well, I don't know as I ever did," laughed Tom. "But what is the difference?"

"Well, first, this is an American-made gun and I am just a good enough American to prefer a gun made in my own country, other things being equal."

"That last was well put in. I don't suppose you would refuse to buy a foreign-made gun that was just as good as yours if you could get it a little cheaper, would you?"

"Well, yes, if I could only get it a little cheaper. If I could get it a good deal cheaper I might buy it, but I don't believe I could ever feel as well satisfied with it. I don't believe I could ever love it as well as I would a home-made gun. I think the Smith the best American-made gun, all things considered, that there is in the market."

"Why?"

"Well, first see how beautifully this gun is finished. Look at that stock. See how dark and rich, and how beautifully it is grained. I took all the varnish off and polished it with oil and you can see every line in the fiber of the wood. Then look through those barrels. They are absolutely flawless. The shooting qualities, too, of the Smith gun are unexcelled. Some of the best, if not the best, records in the world have been made with the L. C. Smith gun. The works are simplicity itself. See here," and, suiting the action to the word, I took out the little screwdriver that always lies in the case with my cleaning tools, and in a trice had the locks out and in my hand. "See how easy it is to take out these locks and clean them when necessary. It doesn't need a locksmith to clean this gun. Anyone with common sense enough to remember where the parts fit can take out the locks and clean them and put them back. I only clean the locks once a year. In the spring, when I put the gun away for its long rest, I give the locks a good cleaning, oil them very slightly,

and put them back. I tried to do that with a couple of other guns that I have owned and had to take them to a gunsmith to have them put back again. Then look at the locking mechanism of the barrels," said I as I put the gun together, and opened and closed it to show Tom how it worked. "You see when the barrels come together this bolt slides through this little hole in the extension rib and holds the barrels down firmly. It is impossible for the gun to fly open with the concussion of the discharge, as I have seen some guns do. Then you see this bolt is not straight but is on an oval and the mechanism of the gun is such that, as it wears, the bolt is thrown farther over and it thus 'takes up the wear,' as it is called, and the gun never shoots loose. I had a Smith gun once of their cheapest grade and shot it for five years, and it was as tight as the day I bought it. The lever had worked around to the left until it was considerably past the center, but the gun was tight. You can put the finest hair in this gun at the breech, and when you shut it, it will cut the hair. The locks are not only simple in construction, but are very strong. There are no small pieces to break or get out of place and, with good care, there is no reason why they should not last almost a lifetime. The gun is perfectly balanced, too. See how nicely it hangs and how beautifully it 'comes up.' Yes, I am about married to the Smith gun and when I don't get my bird I know it is not the fault of the gun." It being rather late, and our pipes being out, Tom and I bade each other good night and retired. The next morning I took an early train for San Diego and took Chic with me.

CHAPTER X

Vacation.

July 4, the day on which American patriotism bubbles, exuberates, perspires and jollifies, had come and gone. The courts, through whose existence and clients' follies I make my living, had adjourned for the Summer recess. The judges were out of town. The lawyers were away, some in the mountains, some in other cities. There was nothing doing and half the city population had hied itself away to the mountains. In company with the rest I proposed to spend a few weeks of needed recreation where the breezes sang through the waving treetops and cooled the brows of numberless peaks and crags. My good friend, whose initials were J. D., and who was always spoken of in that abbreviated fashion by those who were intimate with him, had a snug little home up in the Santa Maria valley and had invited me up there to spend my vacation with him. His good wife, Mrs. W—, was an accomplished musician and had a fine piano in their little mountain home, and so J. D. instructed me to take my music with me, and especially to take along some duets.

"We must make an early start," said J. D. "Old John doesn't go very fast, but if we give him plenty of time and a good rest during the heat of the day he'll get us there."

Old John was the horse, and when I came to make his acquaintance I fully understood and appreciated J. D.'s desire to get an early start.

"You can bring your traps out to Thirtieth Street, where the stable is, and we will start from there."

"What!" exclaimed I in horror. "Lug five hundred shells, a gun, boots and other paraphernalia a mile and a half before daylight to save driving down here with the horse! Have you any idea how much that truck weighs?"

"Well," replied my friend, apologetically, "you see Old John is pretty old and I thought if we could save him that much we would get there so much sooner."

"Gee whiz!" replied I. "If old John isn't strong enough to make the trip from Thirtieth Street down here I guess we'd better charter another horse."

"Oh, I guess he can make it," said J. D., laughing. And so it was arranged that I should be ready at four o'clock the next morning and J. D. was to call for me. At 3:30 the next morning the little alarm clock awoke me from a sound slumber and I tumbled out of my comfortable bed in a hurry. A good wash, I dressed rapidly, got all my "traps" in order at the door and was ready to hear the sound of his wheels at 3:55. For a half hour I waited patiently. The next half hour seemed longer. By six o'clock I was mad, at half past six I was madder, and at seven I was thoroughly disgusted. At eight I went out and got some breakfast, and at half past eight I made up my mind he was not coming. At nine I was beginning to take off my shooting clothes and trying to make it up with Chic, for she evidently had an idea that I had done all that for the purpose of playing a trick on her, when I heard a whistle down at the door. Looking out I beheld J. D. composedly waiting for me in a nondescript sort of a vehicle. I gathered my outfit and descended the stairs in no very good humor, and when I asked him the cause of the delay he replied that he thought four o'clock was too early for me to get up and so he thought he would wait a little longer! Wasn't he charmingly thoughtful? Then when he started to get ready he found one of the traces was

broken. He had no sooner repaired that with a piece of wire than he discovered one of the holdbacks was about to give way. He finally got that fixed and started off, when he happened to think that he hadn't oiled the buckboard, and he had no oil with him, so he had to go back and attend to that. All these things had delayed him, he said. As he enumerated these weak points in the outfit my eye gradually took in the buckboard and alleged harness. The former was loose at every joint, and the wheels wobbled frightfully. The latter was a combination of string, leather straps and wire, that was wonderful to behold. After finishing a survey of these things I turned my attention to Old John, who was toiling up a slight incline as sturdlily as his rheumatic joints, spavins, ringbones and other infirmities would let him.

"J. D.," said I, under my breath, "how old is he?"

"I don't know," replied J. D. languidly.

"Don't you think we are lacking in the respect due to old age in trying to have him haul us up there?"

"Oh, he's a pretty good old horse yet," said my companion cheerfully. "Wait till he gets warmed up and you will see."

"Have you got plenty of good blankets along?" I inquired anxiously.

"What for?"

"Why to sleep under, of course. It will take us two or three days to make a forty-mile trip with this outfit."

"Don't you think so. We'll sleep at home to-night."

I was incredulous. We were going right up into the mountains, and our destination was up in the neighborhood of twenty-five hundred feet above sea level. This, with forty miles in distance, made quite a respectable day's work for a good horse, and to make it with Old John seemed out of the question. Our course could not but have pleased the most enthusiastic exhorter, for it was ever onward and upward. Onward very slowly, and upward very gradually, but

still we progressed. Out through the beautiful El Cajon valley, on through the wooded cañons until at about three o'clock we halted under the large spreading live oaks at Mussey's for a rest. Instead of driving in the early morning when it was cool, we had made nearly half our journey through the heat of the day—and it was a good hot day, too. Here we unhitched Old John and turned him loose to nip the fresh grass and cool off a bit before he was watered and fed. Chic had started out very eagerly and could not run enough, but for the last two or three miles she had been quite content to run along beside the buckboard, although the ground squirrels, which were constantly scurrying hither and thither, were a continual temptation to her. We rested here about two hours and then started on our weary way again. We were at the foot of the Santa Maria (pronounce the "i" short, please) grade. This grade is one of the pleasantest and most celebrated in San Diego county. It is about three miles long, and is cut out of the side of the mountain and winds and twists in and out, following the contour of the cañon along which it is built. At many places there is barely room for the wheels, with a perpendicular wall on one side and a sheer precipice on the other. There are turnouts cut into the side of the mountain, and the team going down is supposed to keep a sharp lookout and turn into one of these places to allow a team going up to pass. But stages with United States mail don't turn out for anybody, and we had just time to scurry into one of these places, when the Julian stage, with four horses on the jump, went by us.

I know of nothing more exhilarating or bracing than to sit up on the seat with the driver of one of these stages, and ride down a good grade. I had the pleasure of riding down this grade at one time with Billy Kerran, one of the daredevil drivers of the country. He never had any accidents, but greatly enjoyed driving a "tenderfoot" down one of those grades

and scaring the life out of him. I would have given something to have got out and walked, but I knew what he was trying to do, and so I took a fresh grip on the buggy seat and asked him to "hurry up." He gave me a look and said only: "Well, I'll be hanged!" When we arrived at the bottom of the grade he confided to me that I was the first man he ever took down there that he couldn't scare. He never knew how beautifully he succeeded with me. But I digress.

The grade is built on the west side of the cañon, and, as it was now getting on in the afternoon, we had a pleasant, shady ride. About half way up a rabbit bounced out from the side of the mountain and started off up the grade. But Chic was trotting along a little way ahead of us and saw Mr. Rabbit coming. She made a grab at him and nearly caught him, and frightened him so that he leaped boldly off the grade. Down he went, falling forty or fifty feet before he struck, then bounced off the rock on which he struck, and continued bouncing from place to place. It must have been fully two hundred feet to the bottom of the precipice, but the rabbit bore a charmed life, for when he struck the bottom he kicked and wriggled a few seconds, then got on his feet, looked bewildered, and with a "consid'able shuck up like" air about him, he hobbled off. Chic had stood with her forefeet planted on the edge of the precipice, watching the aerial contortion act of the rabbit, and when she saw him reach the bottom and limp off in safety, she looked up and whined and commenced to prance around as though she wanted to go through the same performance—but she changed her mind.

Slowly we toiled on up the grade, and at last reached the top. Coming out from the shadow of the mountain the fast declining sun looked at us over a ridge of mountain tops. Looking back into the cañon, along the side of which we had just come, we looked down, down into its depths. I do not know how deep it is, but it is deep enough to give one a sensation of giddi-

SHE MADE A GRAB AT HIM AND DOWN HE WENT.

ness. The west side is studded with huge bowlders and crags and has just enough of soil to give a precarious sustenance to a few dwarfed and scrubby oaks, but the east side of the cañon is bare granite and rises, sheer and ugly, from base to peak. Spread out before us were fields of ripe grain, green pasture lands and acres of waving corn. Suddenly a swish of wings was heard, and looking up, I saw a great flock of wild pigeons flying over. They rested in the tops of some large trees on the side of the mountain at our left, and in a few seconds I was on the ground and trudging after them. Although this chapter begins with a reference to the glorious Fourth, yet it was much later than that when we started. In fact it was nearly the first of August and dove shooting was in season. There was no law on pigeons at any time. J. D. was not much of a sportsman, and had given me accounts of the game to be slaughtered, which I afterward discovered were considerably exaggerated. I had come well prepared, but at the end of my trip I carried a great many of my nicely loaded shells back with me. I was prepared for the pigeons, however, and had some sixes along loaded for their especial benefit.

On I trudged up the mountain, and finally drew near the watchful birds. My, how wild they were! Chic trotted at my side, eagerly expectant. I got a couple of large trees between the birds and myself and cautiously stalked them. But long before I got within range they took flight. I concealed myself behind the trees and soon had the satisfaction of seeing a half dozen of them come wheeling toward me. On they came, flying like rockets. I drew carefully on the leading bird and fired—and killed one flying about four feet behind the one I shot at! This so disconcerted me that I missed clean with the second barrel. I had not shot wild pigeons before to any great extent, but I reasoned that if I kept out of sight perhaps those who escaped would wheel and come

back. So I stood still and reloaded. Sure enough the birds I had shot at soon wheeled and came back toward the main band. I profited by my experience before and held well ahead of the bird I wanted, and at the crack of the little gun the big blue rock fell in a heap. But, as before, I only scored with one barrel. Retrieving the birds I motioned to J. D. to drive on up the road. While he did this I walked along under cover of the trees toward the main band. They were so occupied with watching him that I managed to get quite close to them. I am not generally a pot-hunter, and do not like to shoot birds when they are sitting still, either on the ground or in the trees, but it was getting dusk, for the sun had long since dropped over the mountain, and I knew if I wanted pigeons to eat I must take them as I could get them. So I got a good shot at a bunch that were vigilantly watching J. D. and at Little Nell's imperious summons four of them came fluttering down. Two dead, one badly crippled, and one only winged. At the sound of the gun the whole flock sprang wildly into the air. But they had not seen me yet, and many of them came within range. Standing in my tracks I fired again and again before the bewildered birds found out that that was an unhealthy locality and took their flight for good. As a result of the fusilade Chic and I picked up twelve more of the royal fellows and then went back to the buckboard, well satisfied with our first experience with wild pigeons.

Darkness drew on apace; the stars lent their luster to a calm and lovely evening. Step by step faithful Old John took us nearer our destination. At about eleven o'clock we came in sight of Nuevo, a little village of some half dozen houses, two or three stores and the postoffice. At sight of the first light I thought we were nearing our journey's end, but replying to my question, J. D. informed me that he lived some four miles beyond. The light was in the saloon. All other houses were closed and silent. Chic was curled

up at my feet, sound asleep. I was nearly dead for sleep myself, for I was up rather early that morning, and it had been a hot, hard day. But all things must end, and just at twelve o'clock we pulled up at the door of J. D.'s cabin, unhitched Old John and made him comfortable, and sought our beds very willingly.

CHAPTER XI

My First Deer.

We slept long the next morning, for we were pretty well tired out with our long trip. Finally the call to breakfast warned me that if I wanted any refreshment for the inner man I must bestir myself, and with many a yawn and stretch I crawled lazily forth from my comfortable couch. The day was spent in loafing around in the shade of the magnificent live oak trees, in music at the piano and in looking over some instrumental duets with Mrs. W—. J. D.'s place was in a rugged cañon walled in on every side by lofty mountains. About one hundred yards from his house purled and sung a little mountain stream of the freshest, purest water. Huge trees cast their grateful shade around his little cottage, and altogether he had a delightful mountain home. Inside the cottage was neatly and tastefully arranged. The furniture was of an ordinary sort, but it was all very clean and neat and comfortable. On the north and east sides of the house was a porch, which made a delightful lounging place of a hot afternoon. A few yards from the house stood a log cabin, which had been J. D.'s habitation before he "proved up" on his claim—for he had preempted the place. Outside the log cabin stood a large cook stove under a roughly built shed. Here the cooking was done, and the cabin served for a dining-room and pantry, thus keeping the heat of the cooking from the house. The cabin stood in the deep shade of a large live oak tree, and it was always pleasant and cool inside.

The second morning after our arrival Chic and I started out on a little exploring trip. We wanted to see what our surroundings were. We had taken a short trip before breakfast, which resulted in four doves, one rabbit and two rattlesnakes. After breakfast I shouldered Little Nell and whistled to Chic, and we started off down the creek. A well-worn cattle path led down the left bank of the creek, and I proceeded leisurely along this. Chic ran where she listed and explored every nook and corner of the brush and the rough, ragged hillside. The creek was very low, the little stream which ran through the bottom being scarcely more than four or five feet wide. In places it spread out over a flat, sandy bottom, and seemed scarcely to move; again it contracted into a narrow gorge and rushed through with the speed of a racehorse. The bottom of the creek was quite wide and filled with huge bowlders, while the banks were walls of solid rock and granite. Water marks there were in plenty to show that when the Winter snows melted the little creek, that now looked so peaceful and innocent, became a raging torrent. It was a warm day, and I walked slowly along, fully enjoying the cool shade of the overhanging trees and the music of the little stream at my feet. Occasionally a crash in the bushes would startle me, or perhaps a rattle on the rocky bed of the stream below, and I would look up just in time to see Chic bound into view for an instant. She would merely look to see if I was still continuing in the same direction, and then disappear again. At last she came into view a short distance in front of me and trotted along the path. Suddenly she stiffened into a point, with her nose high in the air. I couldn't surmise what she had found, and walked up to her with the gun on my shoulder. I looked and looked, and at last saw, perched up on the topmost branch of a bush, about thirty yards ahead of us, an old cock quail. I knew that he was the lookout, and that somewhere in his vicinity the old hen and her

covey were snugly hid. I stood and watched him for some time. Chic had seen him and was pointing from sight. I think she would have stood there all day if the quail had not moved. The watchful bird sat with every nerve strained, every sense on the alert, watching our approach. It was plain that if we came any nearer he would give the alarm and fly. How beautiful he was. The plume on his head stood upright and slightly curved to the front, like the plume on the helmet of some valiant knight watching the approach of an enemy to the bower of his lady love. His white necktie gleamed in the morning sun like silver, and the black patch underneath the throat glistened like burnished bronze. The silver gray of the back and wings blended beautifully with the brown and gray mottled sides, and it seemed as if I could see the latter swell and heave with excitement. It was a picture long to be remembered, and I can see it yet. At my right was the rocky bottom of the creek, with the little stream singing and dancing its way along; at my left the bank rose sharply, and was covered with trees and underbrush. The sun shone brightly, but the path was in the deep shade. Through a rift in the shade of the trees a beam of sunlight fell squarely upon the bird which kept such faithful watch over its loved ones. Having taken my fill of the beautiful picture, I moved up a few steps, when, with a call of alarm, the sentinel took flight, and immediately there burst from the bush the old hen quail and about a dozen little ones. The little fellows were hardly bigger than sparrows, and they only flew a few yards up the side of the hill, chirping and twittering, where they lit and scuttled quickly out of sight in the undergrowth.

"Why didn't you shoot?" exclaimed Chic, angrily.

"Why, Chic! Shoot little babies like that! You ought to be ashamed to ask such a question."

"Well, there were two old ones," she replied.

"Yes, the father and mother," said I. "I might just as well kill the little ones as to kill their protectors.

Besides it's the close season on quails now. No, no, Puppy. No quails this trip."

Silenced, but not satisfied, Chic wagged her tail and immediately plunged into brush in the direction taken by the birds, but I called her back and made her come to heel until we were quite a way from there.

Following on down the path, I soon came to a veritable fairy grotto. The brook had disappeared a few rods farther up, and here it reappeared, coming out of a short underground passage. It made its reappearance in a sort of small cave, which was almost hidden by the most luxuriant growth of ferns I ever saw. There were ferns of all sorts and sizes, from the delicate maidenhair to the large ones which towered ten or twelve feet high and stood so thick as to almost obscure the entrance to the little grotto. Out from this enchanting spot flowed the little brook, rippling and chattering as though laughing in great glee at the surprise it created in so suddenly coming back to the light of day. I sat down and enjoyed the beauty of the scene. Then I took a long draft of the clear, sparkling water and stretched myself on the grass. It was getting quite warm, and I removed my heavy climbing boots and socks and sat with my feet in the water. The grotto looked so tempting that I finally removed all my clothing and crawled inside. The water was only six or eight inches deep, and where it dropped into the basin it had a fall of ten or twelve inches. This had washed out the fine sand until there was a hole there large enough to make quite a respectable bath tub.

Here I sat and splashed and cooled myself off until I was suddenly made aware of footsteps approaching. I was thoroughly concealed from sight, yet, nevertheless, I listened apprehensively. Soon, through my screen of ferns, I made out a horse approaching and perched upon its back, without saddle or blanket, but riding "lady fashion," a most beautiful young lady! Here was a dilemma. My clothes and gun laid out there

on the bank in plain sight, but perhaps she wouldn't see them. Alas, for my hopes! Chic was always a friendly dog and very fond of the ladies—like her master, some say. When I crawled into my bath she had quietly appropriated my clothes for a bed. I think

"HELLO! PLEASE DON'T CARRY OFF MY CLOTHES."

the young lady would have passed by without noticing the clothes if that ornery dog had not jumped up and run up to her horse, jumping up in the most friendly fashion in the world, plainly saying:

"Hello! Who are you? Can't you stop a while?"

At this the young lady drew rein and looked in wonder at the clothes and gun lying there apparently

alone. She looked in all directions, and then at the clothes again. Finally, she slid down off her horse and cautiously approached the telltale bundle of garments. Again she looked around, and then cautiously picked up the coat. She patted the dog and picked up the gun, and seemed to be studying the situation. She finally evidently came to the conclusion that something was wrong, for she took a strap off the bridle of the horse, and, laying the clothes across the horse's back, started to bind them on. Then it dawned upon me that I was about to be left in the primeval forest clothed as was our great forefather Adam before he adopted the fig leaf. I couldn't stand that, and so I called out:

"Hello! Please don't carry off my clothes!"

Well, I never saw a girl jump as that one did. She looked in every direction and up into the trees, but did not offer to unload my clothes. Then I called out:

"I'm in here in this little cave, but I guess you don't want me to come out just now. Fact is, I'm not dressed for company."

At this she suddenly seemed to realize the situation, for she uttered a startled "Oh!" and the way she threw those poor duds of mine off that horse, jumped on his back, displaying a most beautiful ankle as she did so, and trotted off up the path, would have made one think she had been sent for.

Convinced that my bathroom was not as private as I had supposed, I hastily crawled out and dressed. While dressing I noticed something that had theretofore escaped my attention, but, with a rapid throb of the heart, I recognized a deer track. It was quite fresh, too, and it was evident that the deer had been there to drink shortly before my advent. As there had been nothing to alarm him, I thought it not improbable that he might still be in the vicinity. I had never seen a wild deer in my life, and all I knew about hunting them might be printed in one short sentence. I knew from reading that I must keep the wind blow-

ing from the deer to me, and that was all I did know. The track was plain and easily followed, as it went on down the bank of the stream, which here was not so precipitous as it was farther up, and the soil was soft, leaving a plain imprint of the animal's hoofs.

"I JUST STOOD AND LOOKED BACK AT HIM."

Calling Chic in to heel, I worked carefully and as rapidly as possible down the stream. I followed the track for about an eighth of a mile, and then the ground became harder, and I lost it. I still kept on down the stream, however, without much idea why I

did so, except that it was the direction in which the deer had been going. How long I toiled on I don't now know, but I know I got thoroughly tired out and gave up the search. I stopped and mopped my dripping face with my handkerchief and looked around. A little whine from Chic attracted my attention, and looking down I saw her gazing intently at something. I looked in the direction indicated by her gaze, and there, not thirty yards from me, stood a fine buck. He had evidently just caught sight of me, for there he stood, looking, with wide-open eyes, in evident surprise at the intrusion. What did I do? Why, I just stood and looked back at him! Why didn't I shoot? I don't know. Ask some other fellow who has done the same thing. Suddenly the buck gave a snort and a bound. At this I started nervously, and then became aware of the gun in my hand. The first barrel went off somewhere in the air and cut the leaves out of the tops of some trees; the second barrel went off in the direction of the fleeing deer, but how close to him I will never know. Then with a crazy yell, I plunged into the brush after him. Dashing up the side of the hill I soon arrived at the top and was clear of the woods and brush, and saw my deer full five hundred yards away, going up the mountain at a two-forty clip. Instinctively I raised my gun part way to my shoulder, and then I lowered it with a feeling of disappointment. Then I remembered that I had not loaded it after firing at the deer. Then I also remembered that, not expecting to see anything bigger than a dove, and knowing that if I shot anything in the woods it would be at close range, I had only nines in the gun when I fired at the deer, and the half-dozen loads of buckshot that I had brought along as a matter of precaution, in case I should get a shot at a deer, still reposed undisturbed in my shooting coat pocket! I thrust my hand down in the pocket, and it was empty. Then I remembered that when the fair lady had so unceremoniously loaded my property on her horse she

had picked up the coat by the wrong end, as women always will, and I had seen the shells fall out, but, in my haste to go after the deer when I discovered its tracks, I had gone off and left my shells lying on the ground where they fell.

To say that I was thoroughly disgusted but faintly expressed it. I had heard of buck fever, and had always thought somewhat disdainfully of a fellow who would get so unnerved at the sight of a deer that he would forget to shoot. But I comforted myself with the thought that I had come upon the deer so unexpectedly that that was the reason of my discomfiture. And then I remembered that I had been tracking that deer for quite a distance and so, to say that I came upon it unexpectedly was hardly fair. In the whole thing I could find no grain of comfort, and sat on a rock and hated myself most heartily. In the meantime I had watched the deer run steadily and gracefully up the mountain until it arrived at the very summit. There it stopped and looked around, taking a survey of the field in every direction, and probably enjoying the discomfiture of the tenderfoot from whom it had so easily escaped. Chic saw the deer, too, and watched it intently, and, as the deer, after satisfying himself that he was not pursued, leisurely disappeared over the top of the mountain peak, Chic looked up at me, wagged her tail and grinned and plainly asked if we were going to follow our quarry.

"Nixy, Chic," said I, "we've had enough deer for one day. Deer meat isn't good, anyhow. We'd rather shoot something with feathers on it, wouldn't we, Puppy?"

She readily assented, and we turned our steps back toward the little glen, picked up my scattered shells and walked slowly up the path to the house. Arrived there at length, I took a good wash out under the tree, where a bench, bowl and clean towels were placed conveniently for that purpose, went onto the porch and sat down to await dinner. I noticed a strange horse

cropping the grass a little distance from the house, but thought nothing of it. My mind was too full of the sorrow and chagrin of that deer to think about strange horses. Soon I heard the voice of Mrs. W— asking me to come in. I rose and went into the house, and had no sooner got inside of the door than I would have given something to be able to back out again, for there, with a mischievous twinkle in her bright brown eyes, sat my heroine of the morning's adventure. An introduction followed, and, of course, those women soon turned the conversation on the incident of the morning. Remembering that the lady had not seen me I braced up and professed utter ignorance of the whole affair. The story was told, punctuated by remarks, exclamations and laughter from me, poor dupe, and then when they attempted to fasten it upon me I brazenly evaded their shots, and was on the point of denying it in toto. when in walked that beautiful dog of mine! With all the abandon of one greeting an old friend, she walked up to the young lady and inserted her cold nose in the lady's fair hand. A start, an exclamation, and then: "Why, that's the same dog! Now I'm sure it was you!"

"Chic!" I exclaimed in despair, "I've spent weary hours trying to teach you to let strangers alone. Why will you persist in always putting yourself on terms of familiarity with everyone you meet?"

"Because strangers, and especially ladies, always pet me," she replied, adding, saucily, "and I like to be petted."

There was no way out of it and I was made the butt of many a good-natured joke and pun during the rest of my stay.

CHAPTER XII

A Fight to a Finish.

One afternoon, a few days after the events narrated in the preceding chapter, Chic and I started out to explore a famous cañon known thereabouts as "The Devil's Eye." We left the house about three o'clock in the afternoon and sauntered leisurely down the hill across the little stream and up the hill on the other side. Here we struck the trail as the small cow paths and narrow tracks by which the horsemen thread the mountains are called. Knowing it was to be a long, hard climb up to the top of the mountain before me, and a long descent on the other side, I proceeded slowly and took little note of my surroundings. Chic wandered wherever her erratic fancy dictated, ever and anon coming in to see if anything was wanted and all the time taking good care to keep me in view. Arrived at the top of the mountain I sat down to take a little rest before proceeding down the other side. Sitting there my eyes chanced to fall on a huge tarantula which stood out in full view as though enjoying a sun bath. Tarantulas are often confounded with the common trap door spider, but when seen side by side there is a vast difference. The trap door spider is a large ugly looking insect, but, compared with the genuine tarantula, it is small and harmless. It is black, with a body about the size of the first joint of the thumb, with legs from an inch and a half to two inches in length. The tarantula is from two to three times as large as the trap door spider, its body and legs are covered with brown, shaggy hair, its legs are from

two and a half to three and a half inches long, and its whole appearance is most repulsive. I acknowledge a most hearty abhorrence of this hideous insect, which amounts almost to positive fear. I detest them so thoroughly that I never lose an opportunity to kill one, but I much prefer a good long stick rather than attempting to put my foot on the creature. I have heard phenomenal stories of its jumping powers, but I never saw them exercised to any great extent. I have heard that if one were teasing a tarantula with a stick six or seven feet long, the insect would leap the full length of the stick and fasten on its tormentor's hand. I never took any chances in teasing one, but always brought my stick down with enough emphasis to immediately crush it. When quite a small boy I was one time teasing a small, black spider with a match, when the insect suddenly leaped the full length of the match, alighted on my thumb and bit me. The thumb swelled up and was quite painful and it frightened me so and the incident made such a thorough impression on my infantile mind that I have ever since held all of the tribe in the greatest abhorrence, and never lose an opportunity to kill one.

The bite of a tarantula, while not surely fatal, is very poisonous. I had almost as soon take my chances with a rattlesnake. A man in perfect health and of a strong, robust constitution, may withstand the bite of either, but the probabilities are against him. A tarantula bite should be treated in about the same manner as a snake bite, and if I were bitten by a tarantula I should employ fully as radical measures as though bitten by a rattlesnake. On this particular occasion I immediately began casting about for a stick with which to dispatch my enemy, when I saw a sudden movement on its part. Looking around to see what caused it I soon discovered another of California's rare insects—and the rarer they are the more thankful we are. The tarantula was on the edge of a large, flat limestone rock which had a large crack running

through the center. Out of this crack came slowly crawling another of the hideous denizens of this semi-tropical country—a centipede. The centipede is shaped something like the thousand-legged worm, which is so common in the middle states. It has a pair of legs to each joint and back of and underneath the jaws are two legs called maxillipedes or foot jaws. These are hollow and through them when excited or enraged a poisonous fluid is forced. The poison of the centipede does not come from the mouth proper, or from the bite of the creature, but through these two organs which are half legs, half mandibles. If undisturbed a centipede will crawl over the hand or any part of the human body and leave no trace other than an unpleasant burning and itching sensation. But if disturbed, then look out! To prevent itself from being shaken off it sinks every claw into the object on which it is resting, and if angered the maxillipedes are added and the poison injected. Soon the parts become red and, as the poison progresses, the parts immediately affected will rot and slough off. Its sting is not necessarily fatal, nor, unless the victim is in a weak condition, is it even dangerous, but it is exceedingly painful and disagreeable. The tarantula and the centipede are mortal enemies, and it was the discovery of the centipede by the tarantula that had caused its sudden movement. As I watched I could see the tarantula gradually stretch himself up on his brawny legs, the hair on his back and legs stiffened like that on the back of an angry dog, and every movement showed that he was preparing for battle. Whether intentionally or accidentally the centipede started crawling leisurely toward the tarantula. When about six inches from his formidable foe the centipede seemed to first discover the huge spider. He stopped and raised the forepart of his body from the rock and gently oscillated it as though inviting attack. His body was a pale green, his numberless legs a brilliant orange, shaded into a lemon color at the points of the

claws. The tarantula was not looking for that kind of an embrace, for he evidently knew that it meant death, and the two terrible insects began "sparring for an opening." The tarantula walked around the centipede and the latter continued its position, resting on the latter half of its body with the front half raised, and it kept turning so as to always face the tarantula. The latter would start slowly around the centipede, suddenly face around and go rapidly back, attempting to take the centipede off its guard. At last the tarantula thought it saw an opening and sprang forward like a flash, but the centipede was too quick for him and met him fairly. The tarantula immediately got away again and neither was hurt in the exchange. At last the centipede tired of maintaining its erect position and gradually began to let itself down, but on the first indication of an attack it immediately raised its body as before to be prepared to receive the onslaught. This was evidently what the tarantula had been playing for, for as soon as he saw his antagonist shows signs of weariness he redoubled his own efforts. Hither and thither he ran, back and forth, until finally he saw the opening for which he had been sparring. With a leap like a tiger he sprang clear from the rock, a distance of fully six inches, and alighted full on the back of the centipede. One nip with his terrible mandibles and the spider was away again, and none too soon, for the centipede had turned like a flash and endeavored to wrap his lithe body about that of his more agile antagonist. But he was not quite quick enough and the tarantula got safely away.

As if realizing the desperate character of his wound the centipede now assumed the aggressive. Instead of waiting the attack of the spider as before, he now ran swiftly after the hairy monster, and I was surprised to see how rapidly the centipede could run and how quickly he could turn. It was now a fight to a finish. Here and there darted the centipede, the

spider continually evading the attack but constantly looking for an opening to land another blow. Sometimes the spider would leap clear over his antagonist but when he did so the centipede would raise himself like a flash to meet him. At last the spider saw the long-looked-for opportunity. The centipede had been growing weaker and weaker from the effects of the spider's poisonous bite. Not only from the poison but also from the nature of the bite, which was so severe as almost to sever the centipede in two. He ran slower and slower and his charges at his enemy were less frequent and less violent. The spider had attained a position back of the centipede. The latter appeared to be sick or tired and seemed not to notice the tarantula. Now was the chance for the latter to deliver the knock-out blow. I saw him gather himself for the spring. He calculated the distance, slightly crouched, and then launched himself upon his apparently dying foe. But alas for him! Whether the centipede had been "playing 'possum" or whether it was galvanized into renewed action by the attack it would be hard to tell, but sure it is that he turned suddenly, raised the forepart of his body as before and received the huge spider with open arms. Then I saw the centipede's head seek the tarantula's body. Twice, thrice, with incredible rapidity and with the motion of a snake striking, did the centipede strike home on its antagonist. The tarantula, at the first instant that it found itself in the embrace of the centipede, made a frantic struggle to break the latter's hold, but immediately recognizing the futility of the attempt, it began biting as fast and as hard as it could. It was a terrible battle! Some hot, short arm in-fighting now took place and it was a question which would be on its feet at the finish. Having delivered its three blows, however, the centipede gradually lowered itself and, as soon as it felt itself on the rock once more, with a quick side movement it wrapped itself completely about its antagonist, tightened its embrace

with one final, convulsive effort, and then ceased to struggle. That centipede was a perfect glutton for punishment, for by this time it was nearly bitten in two in half a dozen places by the tarantula. The latter now seemed to realize that his condition was not at all enviable, for he ceased biting and tried to escape the clutches of the centipede. In vain were his struggles. The centipede's death grip could not be broken. Gradually the spider's efforts grew weaker and weaker and finally ceased. It had been a battle of the giants and both were dead. I took a stick and poked them around but there was no life in either.

In the meantime Chic had come up and had been a spectator of the battle. At first she had started to put her nose down to them, to see if they were good to eat, I suppose, but I grasped her collar and she sat down beside me and looked on with every appearance of intelligent interest. Inasmuch as neither was on his feet at the close of the last round, the referee declared the battle a draw and Chic and I resumed our trip.

CHAPTER XIII

A California Lion.

I think it is fully a mile down that mountain side and a great deal of the way is so steep that it is difficult of descent. But I floundered on, taking my time to it as best I could and going as slowly as I could—for it was not always easy to hold back so as to go slowly. After a long time, as it seemed to me, I arrived at the bottom of the hill and found myself in a most weird and peculiar locality. At my feet rushed a mountain stream of no mean proportions, but from whence it came or whither it went could not be seen from where I stood. The hills were arranged in such a way that they all seemed to meet right there. At the north side of the boxlike hole in which I stood, the cliffs rose perpendicularly to a height of several hundred feet; on the west was the steep hillside down which I had come and which seemed the only way into, or out of, the place; on the east the same steep cliffs that bounded the place on the north side seemed to continue, and on the south side the bank rose so precipitously as to be inaccessible. On the north and east were the perpendicular walls of bare rock; on the west and south the steep banks were covered with vegetation and trees. Following the course of the brook with my eye up the stream I soon saw that the cañon through which it flowed made a sharp turn and the walls were of such a nature that the opening through which the stream ran was hard to discover. On the north side of the cañon the stream disappeared through the same kind of an opening. Following the

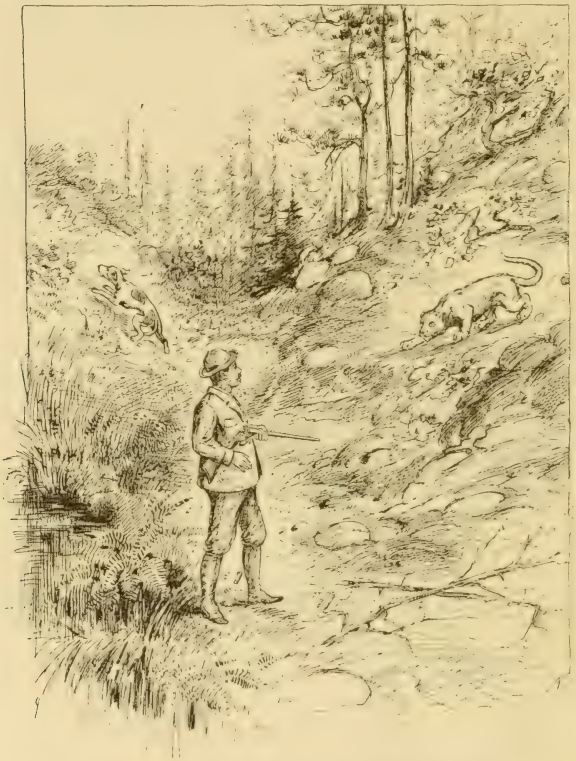
stream a little way down its course I came to the opening in the solid wall of stone, through which the river escaped. It was a narrow cañon, not more than thirty feet wide at its widest place, on each side the walls of solid rock rose as perpendicularly as though set with a plumb line, and through it coursed the little river, rushing and roaring as though impressed with a great idea of its own importance. I thought that if I had anyone with me, and had a good, stout cord to tie around my waist I would like to go down that rushing torrent a little way to see what became of it, but as I had no one with me but Chic, and as she showed that she would decidedly object to going down there, I concluded not to try it. Retracing my steps, I stood for quite a while admiring the weird beauty of the scene. The only way to get into the spot on which I stood was by the west bank by which I had come, or by way of the brook, and from the amount of water that was then running its entrance by that pathway would have been impossible. The bottom of the ravine was not more than twenty yards in diameter and seemed almost circular. Standing there and looking out was almost like looking up from the bottom of a well.

Having taken my fill of the strange scenery, I laid my gun down and walked down to the edge of the water to take a drink. Lying down on my stomach, a pretty good sized one, I proceeded to let myself down to the water when suddenly I stopped as if petrified. There, right under my nose, was the track of some kind of a wild animal that I certainly was not looking for. It was a large cat track and it was perfectly fresh. It needed no particular experience to tell me that it was the imprint of a foot of a California lion. For a moment I seemed powerless to raise myself up, then I slowly pushed myself back and sprang to my feet. The tracks were perfectly plain and, looking across the brook, I saw the tracks on the other side, showing that the animal had leaped the brook there.

To possess myself of the gun was the work of a moment and then I peered anxiously around. At the same time Chic gave a low growl. Looking at her I saw her gazing intently in a certain direction while the hair on her back was rising "like quills on the fretful porcupine." Looking in the direction of her gaze I saw a clump of bushes and, from the movement in them, I knew that my danger lay there. At the same time Chic gave a frightened yelp and, putting her tail between her legs, showed her sprinting qualities to perfection. At the same moment a huge full-grown California lion leaped into full view not more than thirty-five or forty feet from me. I stood like one in a trance. I had heard that these were cowardly brutes, but still I did not care to tackle one there alone. I had studied quite a while before setting out as to whether I should take Little Nell or J. D.'s rifle. The latter was an antiquated affair and I had never shot a rifle; besides, I argued that if I were to hit a deer I would have to be within thirty or forty yards of him anyway and I would rather take my chances with a load of buckshot at that distance than with a rifle. At this moment it occurred to me that I had not put the buckshot loads in the gun. Then I didn't know whether I had or not. I did not dare fire at the lion with small shot; I did not dare attempt to change them then. So there I stood.

The lion crouched and stared at me. Then he began to lash himself with his tail and I thought he was going to spring. But he did not. A few moments passed thus and then I slowly brought my gun up to my waist. Keeping my eyes on the animal I broke the gun, took out one of the loads and looked at it. To my inexpressible relief I found it was a buckshot load. Endeavoring to hastily slip it back into the gun, it dropped from my nerveless fingers and fell at my feet. I did not dare to take my eyes off the animal, which still crouched and returned my stare, so felt in my pocket for another shell. Having found one I slipped

it into the gun and closed the breech. At the click of the closing gun the lion started uneasily. By this time I had somewhat recovered my scattered senses and came to the conclusion that if the lion was ready to quit and call it square I would not object. I



"I DID NOT DARE TAKE MY EYES OFF THE ANIMAL."

brought the gun slowly up to my shoulder, however, and took aim at the brute and then waited. It seemed like hours that I stood there; probably it was but a couple of minutes and then the lion raised to his

feet, deliberately yawned in my face and coolly walked off, keeping an eye on me all the time, however. I watched him until he was about fifty yards away, going off up the hill and to my right. Then my courage suddenly returned and I thought what a fool I was to stand there and let the beast escape so easily. Hastily throwing the gun to my shoulder, for I had taken it down when my unpleasant visitor walked off, I took a quick and unsteady aim and fired. With a yell fit to raise the dead the animal bounded into the air and then, coming down, started to get away from that neighborhood at a rate that put to shame poor Chic's attempt at sprinting. Now I was brave indeed and sent the other barrel after my retreating foe, but without result as far as I could see. Hastily putting in a couple more charges I ran after the lion as fast as I could. He had disappeared around the side of the hill, going at a rate that I could not hope to emulate.

When I arrived, puffing and blowing, at the spot where he disappeared, he was nowhere to be seen. His tracks were there plain enough and I started to follow them. Then it occurred to me that he might lie in wait for me around some curve or projection and spring on me without giving me any chance for my white alley. I reflected that I hadn't lost any lions and therefore there was no good excuse why I should be trying to find one. On the whole I was rather satisfied to let it go as it was and so retraced my steps. It was getting quite dusk in the cañon and, although I knew I would have plenty of light to get home by after I reached the top of the long hill which I had to climb, yet I did not fancy staying where I was after it grew dark. So I whistled for Chic. I started involuntarily at the sound of the whistle. It sounded strange and unearthly down in that hole and echoed and re-echoed until one would have thought there were twenty whistles. No Chic appeared and I started on my lonely climb up the hill, not a little worried about

my pet. All the way up I continued to blow the whistle at intervals but no dog came to the call. At the top of the hill I concluded that she had either found her way back to the house, or that she was lost and in the latter event I should have to organize a hunt for her. Slowly and wearily I plodded my way homeward and arrived on the farther side of the creek at the bottom of the hill just as it was getting too dark for comfortable walking. I crossed the creek and made my way slowly up to the house. When about half way up I descried a white object coming toward me and, before I had time to recognize it, poor Chic almost threw herself into my arms. And what a happy dog she was! How she did run and jump and bark in her pleasure at seeing me. J. D. said she had arrived there about an hour and a half before and that he had been worried about her at first, and then about me. He said she ran up to him and acted as though she was going to bite him. She would nip at him and then run a little way and look at him. Then she would run back and nip at him again. He began to think she had gone mad—so little did he know about dogs—and when she then took hold of his sleeve and tried to drag him from his seat he cuffed her smartly. At this the poor dog whined and went and laid down. Then his wife suggested that she acted as though she wanted him to go with her, and that perhaps something had happened to me. They discussed it together and J. D. got up and motioned to Chic. With a delighted bark she rushed toward the creek, leaped it, and made off up the hill so rapidly that she was soon lost to view. He concluded that if he was going to follow her he must have a horse or else put a rope on her. He had no horse but old John, and to put a rope on Chic he must first wait for her to return. In a few minutes she came back and in the meantime he and his wife had thought that it was improbable that anything had happened to me and he had concluded to wait

a little. My arrival was just as he was getting ready to start out for the top of the mountain to build a fire and shoot off the rifle for the purpose of guiding me. Of course his only idea was that I had lost my way. It was plain that Chic realized the danger and that, while she undoubtedly ran to save her own hide at first, yet when she arrived in safety she wanted to lose no time in leading assistance to me.

I know this little sketch does not read near as well, nor does it give me near as much pleasure to write it, as it would if that lion's skin were lying at my feet as a rug, but so few stories of unsuccessful or frightened hunters find their way into print that this one may, at least, have the charm of novelty. It is also a tribute to the love and intelligence of my partner—Chic.

CHAPTER XIV

Nuevo.

Nuevo is the name of the little town where J. D. used to get his mail. Some romantic parties had attempted to name the village "Ramona," after the celebrated illusion by Helen Hunt Jackson, but the postoffice department replied that there was already one town in California by that name, and about fifty others that wanted it, and so the aspirations of the romantic individuals aforesaid were frustrated. Nuevo, pronounced Noo-a-vo, is a Mexican word signifying "new," and one can certainly see a great many new things at and in the vicinity of Nuevo. I used to drive old John to town every evening after the mail and the daily San Diego papers.

Among the new things that a stranger might have seen at Nuevo was that same old John, the cart and my costume. Not new in the sense of never having been used, but certainly new in the sense of being rarely seen and never duplicated. It was a great pleasure, however, to jog slowly along, shooting rabbits and doves out of the cart, and if I did have to get out of the cart to follow a band of doves, to know that old John would be found standing there awaiting me on my return. How old John did love to stand! And how difficult it was to induce him to move! I don't think he ever moved in his life without vigorous urging, except upon one occasion. I had been to town as usual, after the mail, and was returning with a half dozen rabbits and a dozen or so of doves in the bottom of the cart, and a "jag" of hay, an altogether differ-

ent kind of a jag, by the way, than that which some fellows carry out of town with them, tied onto the back of the cart. The seat was not a very substantial affair and was fastened down with wires and cords. We were going slowly down a slight incline when I saw a black streak lining the sky a little above the horizon. "Looks like ducks," I mused. Nearer and nearer came the black streak. "Can't be ducks this time of the year. Looks like 'em, though. By George, they are ducks! Coming right for me, too!"

"Whoa!"

Old John came up with a sharp turn and a sigh of content. How he did love that command. There was no place to hide, and no time to hide if there had been any place. The ducks were almost upon me and coming like the wind. I couldn't imagine what brought them, where they came from, or whither they were bound, but I had no time to speculate on these points. I crouched down as low as I could and waited with bated breath. Nearer and nearer drew the long line, until I could see that they were going to pass to my right about ten to fifteen yards high and about thirty-five to forty yards away, but flying like the wind. Finally the supreme moment arrived and I rose and let my right go at the leader, and how good it seemed to see him and the next one to him take a header for the earth! That is, I saw them start to do this; I did not see them finish the act. My second barrel went off pointed somewhere in the direction of the astonished moon, which was just showing his grim visage over the mountain tops. He had no business to be up so early, anyway, for the sun was just down, and I was so mad that I wouldn't have cared a rap if I had peppered his saucy old face a little. It is the unexpected that always happens. Old John had moved! Of course he moved at the wrong time. Did you ever know a contrary horse that didn't? Whether he moved at the sound of the first barrel, whether the load was crowding him a little, or whether he saw a

bunch of unusually sweet looking grass just ahead of him, I will never know. But old John was not the only living thing around there that moved. I moved too. I sat down most unexpectedly and emphatically in the seat behind me. Perhaps there was no occasion for my seating myself so forcibly, but I did it. The cords and wires that did duty in the place of the long lost bolts and held the seat in place protested against my unreasonable energy and gave way. There being nothing then to hold me from continuing on my joyous career, I concluded to "git a plenty while I was gittin'" and went on to the ground. I arrived there after various contortions and somersaults which would have done credit to a clown, and was just in time to upset the jag of hay, which had also concluded to take a tumble, and there I was, all mixed up with dead rabbits, doves, hay, strings, wires and cords. Now this hay was what is called "barley hay." That is, it was barley cut in the milk and cured, and if anyone thinks it is any fun to get those barley beards between his flannel shirt and his skin at the sweaty close of a hot day, just let him try it. Chic had been trotting behind the cart and had been in the proper position to receive the hay and the bulky form of her master, but she was spry enough to dodge it so well that she only got slightly pinched. She yelped and wriggled out from the mass and then jumped around and wagged her tail as though thanking me greatly for taking so much pains to cause a diversion in her behalf.

"Dead bird. Go fetch!" growled I, fearing that one of the ducks might be a cripple and not wanting it to get away.

She was all alert in an instant and pricked up her ears and started out for the dead birds—but she started in the wrong direction! She had evidently not seen the birds fall. So I extricated myself as best I could from the labyrinth of wires and cords, reached unavailingly for several barley beards that were scratch-

ing my back, and started out with Chic for the dead ducks. One was found right where it had fallen, but the other was only retrieved after a long hunt and was found some ninety or one hundred yards from where it fell. Chic found it in some long swale grass. Going back to the cart I patched up matters as well as I could and we resumed our journey home. This is the only time I ever knew old John to move except as the result of forcible persuasion.

At another time when I went after the mail I saw an unusual number of rabbits capering about a small, rocky knoll a short distance away from the roadway. Jumping out of the cart I left old John to feed along the way and went over to the knoll and sat down upon a rock on its top. That might seem a queer way to hunt rabbits, but it was all that was necessary to do there. The rabbits were so numerous as to be a perfect pest. This particular knoll was penetrated in all directions with their burrows, and I had sat there only a few minutes when a rabbit burst out of one and scuttled away as fast as he could go. At about twenty-five yards away he turned several somersaults, laid on one side, kicked a few times, and gave up his innocent life. I don't know how long I sat there or how many rabbits I had scattered around. It was a warm afternoon and Chic lay beside me in the shade of one of the great rocks. Suddenly I heard a loud "whiz," as of some huge fly, and looked up and saw a tarantula hawk circling above and in front of me. If you can imagine a wasp about four times as large as the largest wasp you ever saw, with a jet black body and legs and bright crimson wings, you will have a very good idea of what a tarantula hawk is like. Some call them tarantula wasps, but the former name is more common.

I had many times seen them sailing about but had not noticed any of them acting as this one did, so I watched it.

It circled slowly and more slowly around, coming

gradually lower and lower as though watching something on the ground. I looked in vain at the ground immediately beneath him, but could see nothing. At last the hawk suddenly darted down with the rapidity of lightning. A quick movement on the ground directed my sight and I saw a large tarantula there on the bare ground, awaiting the attack of his enemy. Now, it began to get interesting. Quick as had been the hawk, or wasp, the tarantula had been ready for him and squared back on its hindlegs, raised the two forward legs, and opened its powerful jaws. But the hawk was not looking for any such reception as that and veered off. Again and again was this maneuver repeated on the part of both these monster insects, but with no result, until at last the hawk, being either quicker than on his former attacks or taking the spider more unawares, lighted for the infinitesimal part of a second on the back of the tarantula. I do not think the hawk alighted on the back of his enemy in the sense of putting his feet on the spider's back, but he came close enough to thrust the cruel stinger with which the back part of his long body was armed, its full length into the body of the tarantula. The wounded spider immediately turned and endeavored to grapple with his wily foe, but was not near quick enough. The stroke of the wasp had been like the electric spark for swiftness and brevity, but the tarantula evidently knew that it meant death. He now tried to escape and started to run. At this the hawk came lower and by continually threatening kept the tarantula so constantly on his guard that he could not escape. As the poison began to work the tarantula gradually became more and more unwary until he suddenly received a second thrust from his enemy. The hawk now seemed to know that his work was completed, and he seemed to be intoxicated with joy, for he rose into the air and fairly whirled around, going in mad circles up and up, taking long flights away and suddenly and swiftly

returning. The poor spider, on the other hand, was rapidly growing weaker and weaker. His efforts to escape grew less and less systematic, and finally he tumbled over and died. At the end of the tragedy the hawk came slowly and carefully down and lit on the ground near his ancient enemy. Carefully he approached the defunct spider and I watched his every movement with considerable interest, for I wondered what he would do with it. When he arrived within a few inches of the dead giant he stopped and took a long survey of him. Then he slowly approached, cautiously put out one leg and gave the recumbent spider a push with his foot. There was no answering move. The hawk then sprang into the air and circled slowly about the tarantula, coming lower and lower until he finally hung suspended in the air not more than an inch above the dead spider, fanning the air violently with his wings, and making a loud, buzzing noise. But the spider was as dead as Julius Cæsar—though why Cæsar should be any "deader" than any other deceased person I never could quite understand—and did not move, and the hawk finally alighted upon the body of the spider. Then for fully twenty minutes the hawk exulted in his victory and gloried over his fallen foe. He would run over the spider, push his dead body with his feet, act as though trying to drag the tarantula away, and in every other manner that an insect could showed his savage joy. But he made no attempt to devour the spider, and finally arose and flew away. Gathering up my rabbits I picked up the remains of the tarantula, which were fearfully swollen, wrapped them up in a paper and carried them back to the cart. I intended to preserve them in alcohol, but they jostled out of the cart and were lost.

The next evening as J. D. and I were starting out for town, just at the top of the hill we came in sight of a horse and cart coming around a bend in the road. A nearer approach showed it to be my friend Tim, with Bob and a borrowed cart. Tim was one of

the best, whole-souled, all-round sportsmen that anyone ever knew, and it was a pleasure to know him. He and I were chums, and he had promised to come out there on that trip, but he had been so long about it that I began to think he was not coming. Bob was another great friend of mine. He had accompanied me on two hard fought election campaigns, and had been my tried and trusted companion on many a dark night's trip through the mountains. Up or down grade, across lots or through mountain trails, it was all one to Bob. He was always ready when called upon, and always faithful. Bob was Tim's wife's standard bred buggy horse, and he was a jewel, too. Check him up and drive around town and he would put on more style than anybody's horse; let the check down and take an early start for a drive out in the country and he knew just what was before him, and would plod along as though he never had any life in him. But if you wanted or needed a little speed, it was there. We could shoot anywhere around him; he never even blinked an eye. Tim had Betsy with him, too. Betsy wasn't his wife; no, not exactly. Betsy was his 10-gauge Scott gun, and what a shooter she was! Chic and Bob were well acquainted and were great friends. Chic danced around Bob's head and jumped up at his nose; Bob, in turn, shook his head and snorted at Chic, and they undoubtedly told each other the news in language not understood by us. After hearing the news from town and telling a little in return, J. D. and I went on into Nuevo, and Tim, who was tired with his long ride, went on to the house and put up his horse. That night we retired very early, and as Tim and I were composing ourselves for sleep—for on account of the limited accommodations we had to sleep together—Tim said:

"What time do we get up in the morning?"

"About four o'clock," said I.

"Four nothing," growled Tim, "you don't catch me

getting out of here at any such unearthly hour as that."

"All right," said I, "but it's a case of fish or cut bait. If we want any meat to eat we must kill it. I don't believe there's any in the house." (That was wicked, for I had brought home several rabbits and doves that night.) No more was said, and I had slept, as it seemed to me, about fifteen minutes, when Tim's elbow was inserted between my ribs, and he whispered:

"Come on. It's time to get up."

"What time is it?"

"I don't know, but it's getting daylight."

"Humph! Thought you were not going to get up so early!"

"Well, if it's a question of eating or not eating, why, I prefer to eat, and as you say we've got to shoot what we eat we may as well be getting at it."

By this time we were both thoroughly awake and sprang out of bed and dressed. A trip over the hills, some grand early morning sport with the doves on a wheat stubble near some plowed ground, and we were back with hearty appetites for the steaming breakfast we found awaiting us. Tim looked at the broiled doves and bacon, the fried potatoes, buttered toast, coffee and cream that were spread upon the snowy cloth, gave one reproachful look at me, and proceeded to do justice to the meal. After the meal a pipe, then a walk down in the woods, then lunch, another pipe and a nap, and then for the doves and rabbits, a quart of good, cold water from the well at Nuevo, and then home in the cool of the evening.

Those were pleasant days. Tim remained about a week, and then business called him away. I remained another week after he had left and enjoyed every minute of my stay. Poor J. D. has gone to his last account. I have never seen Mrs. W— since, but no one knows better than she how well I enjoyed my visit to her little mountain home, and if this should ever hap-

pen to come under her eye she will know that even yet her many courtesies and constant endeavors to add to our pleasures are not forgotten. About a week after Tim's departure, J. D. and old John took me down to Nuevo; there I took the Julian stage and sat up on the seat with the driver while we went whirling down the Santa Maria grade up which old John had crawled so slowly with us. Chic ran happily along beside the stage, and I took my supper in San Diego, after having called a messenger boy and sent a nice bunch of doves up to Tim's house.

CHAPTER XV

Murphy's Canyon.

It was about the middle of September. The quail season had opened on the first and the shooting had been very good. I was just enjoying the sound slumber that comes just about dawn when a gentle tapping on my door awakened me.

"Well! What's wanted?" I inquired.

"On account of but it's a splendid morning for quail to bite and I didn't know but you'd like to go out and ketch a few."

Would I! Well, I wonder! I knew the voice very well, and, tumbling out of bed in a hurry, I admitted my old friend George. George was quite a character in his way. and one of the best fellows for a shooting or fishing trip that I ever met. He had a slight difficulty in his speech, which made it sometimes hard for him to get started in what he wanted to say. Once started, however, he proceeded without any trouble. Some of the letters of the alphabet were harder for him to start with than others, and, as he had no difficulty with the letter "O," he had acquired a habit of beginning many of his sentences with the phrase "On account of." The phrase sometimes being quite irrelevant to what followed gave it a rather comical sound. George was a fellow of great personal magnetism, and if one was with him very much it was almost impossible to help falling into some of his peculiarities. In speaking of it at one time George said: "On account of if a fellow says that to mock me it makes me mad; but if he does it accidentally I have

to laugh." As George was about six feet one, or thereabouts, no one cared particularly to make him mad, and, like all big fellows, it was not easy to provoke him, but if once angered, then look out! He was a plumber, and the best one I ever saw. If there was a job any plumber could do, George could do it, and he could do a great many that other plumbers could not. Many a time when others had failed at some particular job George was sent for and had no trouble with the matter. Whenever he had anything to do that brought him near my office he would call and if I was not busy, which was too frequently the case, we would put in an hour or so chatting. Once he dropped in and, lounging into a chair, exclaimed:

"On account of I just made three dollars in about three minutes."

"That so," said I. "How was that?"

"Jest turned up a little screw."

"And you charged three dollars for turning up a screw! That's robbery."

"On account of I didn't charge him nothin' for turnin' up the screw, but I charged him three dollars for knowin' jest where to find the screw and jest which one to turn, and jest how much to turn it. See?"

I saw. George was a great pointer man, while I, before I had Chic, had been a champion of the setters, and many a battle of the wits George and I had in my rooms.

As I tumbled out of bed on this particular morning it was just getting gray in the east. A bank of thin clouds hung over the sky, a cool breeze was stirring, and all gave promise of an ideal day for the prince of small game birds, the California quail. It was the work of a few moments to rush through my toilet and jump into my shooting clothes, and we were on the way. Old Buck was in the shafts, and old Buck was as much of a character as his master. Although his name implied age, yet he was only a four-year-old, but was, to all appearances, as steady and sedate as a horse

of fifteen or twenty summers. But appearances are deceptive, as we found to our cost.

"Where shall we go, George?"

"Well, there ain't been much shooting done yet, and I thought Murphy's cañon as good a place to go as any. I know a side shoot up there that they ain't many of the fellows onto, and we'll try that a whirl."

So on we went. Chic and George's three-quarters grown pointer puppy sat in the back part of the light wagon and craned their necks around the seat to see where they were going. I always like to let my dog ride out to the shooting ground, so that she will be fresh and eager when we arrive there. There is no necessity of letting a dog run himself down when first starting out "so as to take the wire edge off." The wire edge is what you want if your dog is a good one and is well under control. Out through the north edge of the city we rolled easily along, down the grade into Mission Valley, up the valley and across the river, and we were soon on the shooting ground.

Driving on over some very good ground we went on up the bottom of the cañon until we came to a small cañon branching off from the main one. Up this we turned and drove clear to the head of it. Jumping out we unhitched old Buck, and I prepared to tie him to the back end of the wagon.

"Hold on there, Kid," said George. "On account of that there wagon cost money, and I ain't stuck on coming back here and finding it strung out all over the cañon here."

"What do you mean? Would Buck do anything?"

"Not a thing but make kindling wood of it," replied George.

Looking around, we finally found the stump of a sapling which had been broken off about seven feet above the ground and which was about as thick as a man's ankle. To this, with a couple a half-hitches and many other various knots, George tied old Buck. Then sur-

veying his job complacently, he remarked: "On account of I guess he won't break that loose."

Loading our pockets with shells and calling the dogs, which needed no second invitation, we started. Up over the first hill we climbed, and down into the cañon on the other side. This was a narrow gulch with rather precipitous sides, and the bottom was lined with small bushes and undergrowth, while the last year's grass, grown long and rank, lay in matted thickness on the ground.

"On account o' where's Chic, Kid?" asked George.

"Hanged if I know. We should have watched her better."

"Last I saw of her she was headed up that side hill yonder and going like a coyote."

"There she is," I exclaimed, as Chic came into sight over the brow of the hill some distance away; "look at her go."

With our attention thus called to the dog, we both had our eyes on her when she suddenly wheeled, took a few steps, and froze into a beautiful point.

"Wow!" I exclaimed.

"By the bald-headed piper that played before Moses," cried George, "but she's got 'em."

"That's what she has," replied I, and, clutching our guns, we hurried with long strides to where the intelligent little beauty was impatiently awaiting us. Arrived at her side, we looked around, and George, quickly taking in the ground with the instinct of an old hunter, said quietly:

"Now, Kid, them birds are right there in that little clump of brush, and when they get up they'll go straight up over that hill, and that's the last we'll ever see of them. Now, we'd better go around the dog and go up the hill a little ways and come down on the birds from that side. They won't fly back this way on account of the dog, and so they'll either fly over onto that nice side hill opposite or go on down the cañon. On account of

we'll knock the stuffin' out of 'em whichever way they go."

No sooner said than done. We worked carefully around Chic, went a few yards up the hill, and, coming back toward the birds at a right angle, nearly, to the line of Chic's point, flushed the band. At the rise George's gun cracked twice to my once, and at each report a bird came tumbling down. I was a little slower than George, as in fact I nearly always was, but had as good success, getting a bird with each barrel. As George had predicted, the birds separated and part of them flew down the cañon, while the balance deployed over the side hill opposite, which was not very steep and which was covered with long, dead grass where the birds hid. Picking up our birds, George went on down the cañon, while I followed those which had settled on the side of the hill. The hill was steeper than it had looked from the opposite side, and there was some difficulty in keeping my feet, and at the same time keeping a lookout for the birds, for I knew that one was liable to rush out from under my feet at any time. I sent Chic on ahead and she went up the hill like a charge of cavalry, for she had watched the birds and knew where they were fully as well if not better, than I. As I had expected, when I got right in the bottom of the ravine and had just begun the ascent on the other side, a bird rushed out of a tuft of grass not more than three feet from me. Hurriedly bringing the gun to bear, I stepped on a round pebble, my feet went out from under me as though they had been on roller skates, the gun went off in the air, and I sat down with more force than elegance on a bunch of mighty sharp, irregular stones. A roar of laughter told me that my mishap had been noticed and that my companion was enjoying my discomfiture, and I mentally registered a vow to get even before the day was over. Gathering myself up as quickly as possible, I again started to climb the hill. A little way up I looked and saw Chic holding her bird all right,

With considerable puffing and sweating, for it is always warm in those cañons, I arrived at her side, put up the bird and missed it clean with both barrels. It was quite a comfort, when I looked hastily around, to find that George was nowhere in sight, and consequently had not seen that elegant miss. There was another one who had, though, and Chic squared herself around in front of me and exclaimed: "Don't you think this is a pretty hot day and this a pretty hard hill to locate birds on and then have you miss them in that way?"

"Well, if you'd had the fall I did your nerves would be a little loose, too, I guess. Come, why don't you get out and find another one? There are lots of them here."

"I want a drink," said she.

Water is scarce and hard to find in these Southern California hills, and the wise sportsman always goes provided. We had a keg of water in the wagon, and I had a light canteen slung over my shoulder. Taking off my canvas shooting coat I made a depression in the ground with my heel, placed the coat on the ground and forced part of it into the depression, thus making quite a convenient cup for Chic to drink out of without wasting the water. I poured some water into this and watched her lap it up with eagerness, gave her more until she had had all she wanted, then pouring a little in my hand I bathed her eyes and head, all of which she thoroughly enjoyed. Then putting on my coat and slinging the canteen over my shoulder again, I motioned her away, and she went off as fresh as though just starting out. A few rods away she made another point, and I went up and had the satisfaction of making a neat, clean kill. The sound of George's gun down the cañon told me that some of the birds down there were taking their last rest in his capacious pockets, for George scores a great deal oftener than he misses. Chic and I had some great sport on that side hill, although it was hard work. When I finally heard George's voice calling to me I had fourteen birds in

my pockets and as many had got away. Walking over to my companion, I found he had nineteen. George always had a knack of getting more birds than the fellow he went out with, but he did it in such a genteel way that there was no thought of rivalry, jealousy or heart burning—except once. I will never forget how George knocked out a couple of birds that got up right in front of us before I had time to get my gun to my shoulder. It was as though they had been struck with lightning, it was done so quickly.

"I couldn't help it, Kid," George had said, apologetically. "You see the last time I was out me and Conn was out together, and we went to work to see which one could shoot the quickest, and on account o' when them two birds got up I was kind o' thinkin' o' Conn, and jest let 'em have it. I'll give you a fair shake at the next ones," said he, laughing at my lugubrious expression. But that is another story.

Arrived at the top of the hill, where George was awaiting me, we held a council of war, and it was finally decided to go back to the wagon and unload, eat a lunch and go out again, which program was very successfully carried out. After a good rest, feeding old Buck, and swapping a few yarns, we again took to the hills. Going over the range at our left we went down into the cañon at the bottom, followed that down to the foot, made a little detour, and went back up another, without any success. The dogs had been working well, although George's puppy began to show signs of weariness. We stood together consulting where we should go next, when suddenly George exclaimed:

"W-w-w-well! On account of did you see that?"

"See what?"

"See that there puppy of mine. He like to a-stood on his blamed head. Look at him now."

And sure enough there was the puppy on as stanch a point as one could well wish to see. About twenty yards away stood Chic, backing beautifully. Hastily

adjourning our council, we got to the dogs as fast as we could, put up a fine, large band, and both scored. From this on our work was fast and sharp. Birds were plentiful, and we had our shooting clothes on.

Again our pockets grew too heavy for comfort, and we started for the wagon to unload, get a drink of fresh water, and take a little rest. Trudging along, we arrived at the top of a hill that looked down on our camping place. I was busily talking about something or other and had noticed nothing unusual, when George exclaimed:

"On account o' ain't that our wagon?"

"Of course it is," said I.

"An' ain't that our outfit scattered around there?"

"Why, certainly," I answered impatiently.

"W-w-w-well! On account of where's that onery horse?"

Then my eyes were opened. Look where we would, there was no old Buck in sight. Hastily rushing down the hill, we examined the ground. We could not even find the stump to which he had been tied. But we found the hole in the ground where the stump had been. Old Buck would doubtless have taken that with him if he could. Buck had simply pulled until he had broken off the stump at the roots, under the ground, and then he had taken his departure.

"What kind of an animal is that, anyway?" I inquired, woefully.

"On account o' he's jest a rhinoceros," replied George, soberly. "Well, Kid," he continued, "there's nothing else for it. We must haul the wagon to them bars at the end of the pasture where we come in. Old Buck can't get out, and we've got to catch him some way."

It was down grade all the way, and, throwing our hunting traps into the wagon, George got between the shafts and I took hold behind and we started. Hot! Well, I should think it was! We could see old Buck's tracks where he had gone down the road ahead of us. We could also see ominous looking marks on the

ground, where the stump which now dangled like a huge club at the end of the inch rope around old Buck's neck struck the ground. Presently we began to see spots of blood on the ground, and we knew that as old Buck ran the great club was belaboring him at every jump. We took considerable gratification out of the fact that the brute was not having such a picnic as he had expected. About half way down was a place in the road where some recent rain had stood, and the spot was still wet and slippery. When we came to this I thought, as it was down grade, I would ride over it. My additional weight made it harder for George to hold the wagon back, and he twisted his neck to see what was the matter. In so doing his foot slipped in the mud and down he came, and it was only by putting on brakes very suddenly that I kept the wagon from running over him. It was cruel to laugh, but I remembered how he laughed at my mishap up in the cañon, and he did present such a comical appearance, with his hands and face covered with mud, that I fairly roared.

"That's all right, Kid," said he, mournfully, and somewhat testily, "but it'll be my turn next."

"You had your turn up in the cañon. Now we're square."

At the recollection of my misfortune George's face brightened and we resumed our toilsome journey. About half way down to the gate, or about a mile and a half from where we started, we found old Buck. He was quietly browsing on the hillside, dragging after him at every step the stump to which he had been tied. He was covered with bruises and blood from head to foot, and was a sorry looking spectacle. George took a sack and falsely pretended to have some oats in it, and by this means managed to get close enough to the impenitent reprobate to catch him, when we hitched him up and drove him home. Next day I saw George in the plumbing wagon with old Buck hitched to it.

After exchanging greetings I asked him how the horse was, for his whole body was a mass of bruises.

"A little stiff, that's all."

"I shouldn't think you would want to drive him until he got over his soreness a little," said I.

"On account of his soreness, is it? I'll make him sore. W-w-why, I'd drive him if he couldn't move a hoof! G-g-git up, you old brute," and George shook the reins vindictively as he drove off.

CHAPTER XVI

Cactus.

Did you ever have any experience with a California or New Mexico cactus? If not, you do not know what a cactus is. I suppose all inhabitants of the Eastern states have seen diminutive specimens of the cactus in hothouses, or cherished in small pots in some housewife's window. Well, imagine, if you can, the same plant grown eight or nine feet high and spread out until it covers acres of ground. I have seen the prickly pear, or flat-leaved cactus covering acre after acre of otherwise good land, and where it once gets root it is almost impossible to exterminate it. This is the kind usually seen in the East. Another kind, called by the natives "chollas" (pronounced choy-as), starts up from the ground like a bologna sausage, grows to be about eight or nine inches long and one and one-half to two inches in diameter, and then a blossom springs out from the very end of the uncanny thing. From this blossom sprouts another "cholla," which goes through the same process of reproduction as the first. Each joint is as full of thorns as an egg is of meat—and such thorns! When a cluster of these chollas attains a height of six or seven feet and spreads out over a large surface they are a sight to make one shudder. Another very common kind of cactus is the one variously called "hard head," "round head" and "nigger head." It grows close to the ground and in size varies all the way from the size of a thimble to a bushel basket. Until they attain the size of a base ball it is almost impossible to see them, so near the color of the dead grass are they, but it is not at all im-

possible to feel them! In one respect the different kinds of cactus seem to be similar, and that is in regard to their thorns. The microscope of the naturalist might discern a vast difference in the size and construction of these instruments of torture, but to the anatomy of the unwary hunter they are all the same. One seems just as sharp as the other, just as poisonous, and just as difficult to extract. Each thorn is armed with a barb which causes the thorn to work its way into the flesh when once it gets started. It doesn't need very much of a start, either. These thorns are from two inches and a half long down to those which are so small that they cannot be seen with the naked eye—but they can easily be felt with the naked flesh. I remember once smelling of a cactus blossom. The stem was wrapped with cloth to prevent contact with the thorns, and it never occurred to me that there would be thorns inside the beautiful flower. I buried my nose in the heart of the fair but frail beauty, and an intense itching soon told me that I had ventured rashly. My nose was filled with little spines so small that I could not see them, but their presence was easily detected by passing the finger lightly over the nose—their presence was also made known to myself in a far less agreeable manner. How many a blossom of gladsome beauty is fraught with pain and suffering; how many a fruit of lovely appearance is rotten at the core; how many a—but there, excuse me, I won't moralize.

Tim and I started out one fine afternoon for a little whirl at the doves. It was late, but we had Bob, and he was in fine fettle and took us along at a rapid, swinging gait that was all his own. Tim said he knew where there were plenty of doves, and I hoped he did, but I didn't care much. I always had a good time just to get out of town, to see the fields, orchards and vineyards, to see the birds fly and hear them sing, to watch the ground squirrels scuttle into their holes as we rode by, to see the cattle and horses in their pastures, to see my little dog run and hunt, to see all nature in its quiet, peaceful

but awesome beauty—this was pleasure and recreation for me, even if I did not get a shot. I would a great deal rather get a few shots, however. As we rode along our conversation turned to the troublesome cactus. I always carried a pair of close-fitting plyers, or nippers, with me to pull the annoying and painful thorns out of myself and dog, and I had these in my hand, toying with them as we rode along, and that turned the conversation in that direction.

"Yes," said Tim, "I'll never forget my first experience with the blamed things. I had just come here from the East, and was a 'tenderfoot,' sure enough. The Missis and I went out for a hunt with H. W—'s folks. I had been used to seeing from ten to twenty quails in a bevy, and when I got up there in Paradise Valley and saw one bevy with at least five hundred birds in it I could scarcely contain myself. The Missis was all excitement, too, and I thought she'd have a fit. She didn't, though. I had Bang with me then. He was a great dog; I never expect to own his like again. I wish I could get hold of the cur that poisoned him." Tim always branched off this way when he thought of Bang, and he was not to be blamed, for Bang was one of the finest pointers I ever saw; bred in the purple and trained to perfection. He was poisoned before Tim had been long in San Diego, and we could never discover who did it. "Well," continued Tim, "I got out and left the Missis with W—'s folks and started after those quails. The first time they got up they made such a noise that they fairly rattled me; I shot at the band and never got a feather. Then I followed them over the hill and they settled and hid nicely, and Bang got to work on them. My! how that dog did draw and point, draw and point, and how I did shoot, shoot, shoot, until I thought I had all the quails in the country. But I finally shot one that fell right in the middle of a big bunch of chollas. I didn't know anything about them, and thought they were like any ordinary thorns, and I had never minded the thorns very much back East. First I sent Bang in after it. He went

in a little way and then backed out, whining. He had more sense than I. I was determined to have that quail, and so in I went and got it. Of course I felt the thorns, but I paid no attention to them. I came out and went on with my hunting. Pretty soon the things commenced to itch and scratch. I stood it as long as I could, and then I had to go over behind a tree and take off every stitch of clothing I had on and hunt for cactus. I didn't get 'em all out, either, although I worked at it for over an hour. When I finally got dressed again and went back to where the folks were I found that H. W— had eaten up all the lunch. Wow! But I was mad! Poor Bang didn't get over the cactus for a week."

This reminded me of one time down in the Sweetwater Valley, when I was shooting doves. I had shot one which fell in a bunch of chollas. I could see the dove plainly enough, and there seemed to be a kind of path through the chollas nearly to where the dove lay. I cautiously worked my way in by that path, for doves were scarce that day, and I wanted that one. I got to where I could almost reach the dove when I found a long branch of chollas directly across my path. Although they are large and strong looking plants, they break very easily. A blow on one of them with a stick will send raining down a dozen or more of the joints of different sizes. Carefully placing the muzzle of my gun on this branch that lay across my path, I pushed on it with the intention of breaking off the branch. My intentions were doubtless all right, but the execution was very poor. The gun slipped off the branch, the latter flew back to within a few inches of my nose, and the force of the backward spring of the branch was sufficient to detach the last sprouting section, and it struck me fair and square in the nose! It was about the size of an egg, and it stayed where it struck! I made haste slowly to get out of there, and once out of the patch of chollas I laid my gun on the ground, picked up a couple of small sticks, and placing one each side of the tormenting cholla, I flipped it off. If I had

been greener at the business I would have seized it with my fingers and pulled it off, and thus filled my finegrs with the torture; but I knew enough about them to never touch one. But, having gotten the thing off my nose, my misery was but begun. The cactus is so constructed that whenever one of its spines pierces anything the spine immediately pulls out of the parent stem and leaves itself fast in the new object for which it has so suddenly conceived such a strong attachment. Sitting down on the ground, I took out a little pocket mirror which I always carried, and a pair of nippers, and began the interesting occupation of picking chollas out of my nose. I got them all out but two, and these were so far in I could not get hold of them with the nippers, and was obliged to leave them there until I got home. My nose swelled to nearly double its normal size, which is large enough in all conscience, and assumed a rich, roseate hue which would have driven an old toper to distraction. Oh, it's pleasant; this interviewing a healthy, lively cactus! I've even heard Ad. Pearson say that the things would chase a fellow!

As I finished my reminiscence we drew near our destination. We soon pulled into Mr. W—'s place, took Bob out of the shafts and tied him to a haystack, assembled our guns, filled our pockets with shells and started for the plowed ground, where we could see the doves flying back and forth. Along one side of the plowed field ran the bed of the brook, now dry, and this was bordered on either bank with low trees and scrubby undergrowth. Just above, on the top of the hill, was a patch of wheat which for some reason had not done well and had not been cut. It was an ideal place for doves, and there were plenty of them there. Chic didn't amount to much at this kind of shooting except to retrieve, but she enjoyed it all the same. I gradually worked away from Tim, and finally found myself quite a ways from him and across the bed of the creek. It was warm work tramping that plowed ground on a warm day, and I thought I would take a little rest. Walking a little

down the bed of the creek, I stepped toward the bank. Just on the brink I suddenly felt the well-known prick of a cactus. I was just prepared to sit down when I stepped on the pest. It pierced my heavy calf shoe as though it had been paper, and inserted itself without the slightest hesitation into my instep. In order to rid myself of the thorn as quickly as possible, I took a hurried seat on the bank, and to my horror found I had sat upon a perfect nest of them. Endeavoring to rise quickly, I placed both hands at my sides, and found the obliging cactus was there first! Tim was fully a mile away, and yet he swears to this day that he heard me yell. Of course I don't believe it; but then, as I never knew Tim to tell a lie about hunting, or when he has a joke on me, what am I going to do? What did I do then? I am very much afraid I said "darn," or something like that. Some men would have sworn a few at such provocation. I didn't take any comfort in sitting down for a week. Well, I did the best I could under such circumstances, and found my way back to the buggy, where I waited for Tim. He actually laughed when I told him what had occurred. He laughed until thoughts of manslaughter and other recreations entered my disturbed mind. He has laughed at it ever since and delights to tell about it when he gets me in a crowd. Some men are very cruel, but I never thought Tim was, and in studying over that unfortunate situation and endeavoring to discover the cause of Tim's hilarity, it occurred to me that perhaps he laughed because he thought it was funny! But as I never could see anything funny about it I dismissed that hypothesis and gave it up. We got all the birds we wanted. That evening I wandered into the gun store. Several of the gun cranks were sitting around discussing guns, ammunition, wads, etc., and one of the boys kindly offered me a chair. But I had no use for chairs. A few questions brought out the story of my adventures, and then Ad spoke up. Ad always had a story for every emergency. Nothing ever happened to

you or your friend that did not remind Ad of something that had happened to him or to one of his friends. He generally saw your advance and went you several better. It was extremely chilly when Ad was not up with the procession as far as telling a good story is concerned. Ad had hunted with George so much that he had acquired some of his idioms.

"Where is your tobacco, Frank?" said Ad.

Receiving the tobacco, Ad took a generous chew and absentmindedly tucked the rest of the plug away in his pocket. "On account that that reminds me of one time when I was out with Wieger. We were up in Mission Valley, hunting along the river and looking into the ponds to see if we could scare up a lonely duck or two. We had walked a good deal and hadn't had the very best of luck, and were getting kind o' tired. It was after sundown and was just dark enough so we could see an object on the ground, but could not tell what it was without looking at it closely. I was standing there waiting for W— to come up, and finally he came along. He was puffing a little, and as he came up to where I was he saw what he took for a bowlder, about the size of a peck measure, lying there on the ground. 'Vell,' says Wieger, 'I guess I sits me down a liddle.' And he just kind o' let himself go and went down on that supposed rock. Well, it wasn't nothing else in the world but one o' them big niggerheads, and the howl poor Wieger let out of him would have turned an Apache Indian green with envy. I started to laugh, but I soon quit that. Wieger just went right up in the air, and that blasted niggerhead stuck right to him. I got a couple of sticks and tried to pull it off, but it was no use. The thorns were sunk in clear to the roots. How the poor fellow did suffer! There was nothing else to do, so I went and got the buggy, and W— got in the back of the buggy on his knees and leaned his elbows on the seat. Every little jog of the wheels in a rut, or even the motion of the buggy on level ground, would shake that horrible thing around, and W—'s

torture must have been terrible. He groaned and yelled until I was afraid people would think I was killing someone in that buggy. We finally got to town and drove to Dr. N—'s office. Doc took a pair of sharp nippers and cut off the thorns, and then took a pair of plyers and pulled them out one by one. You ought to have heard poor W— groan. On account that I never knew how bad a genuine old cactus was until then."

Ad took a fresh chew and looked around, but none of the boys laughed. In fact they all looked as if they had that tired feeling. Chic yawned and looked up at me quizzically; one by one the boys walked out. Frank exclaimed:

"There, Ad, you've broken up the crowd."

Ad grinned and made no reply. I guess I was the only one that believed the yarn. I always believed Ad and George. Someway they had a kind of way about them when telling a story that it seemed as though they really expected and wanted to be believed. One couldn't help but feel that they would feel bad if they thought that their hearers doubted their word, and as I liked them too well to want to hurt their feelings, I always believed them. It was quite a struggle, sometimes, between my friendship and my credulity, but my friendship generally won. I have often sadly thought that probably the boys did not give me as much credit for my implicit faith as they should have done. It was frequently a terrible strain. Well, boys, those days have long since passed. Many miles intervene between me and the friends out yonder by dear old ocean's soothing sounds, and I would give a good deal, Ad and George, to lie by a camp-fire to-night, our guns nicely cleaned, birds drawn, pipes between our lips, the "choke-bore" handy, and listen to some of those incredible but interesting yarns that none tell so well as you.

CHAPTER XVII

The Lagunas.

It was a bright morning in November when two light wagons pulled out of San Diego and took the road leading to the mountains. In the first wagon were George, Ad, Charlie G— and the writer, with our guns, shells, clothing and other personal effects. The second wagon was directed by a gentleman of color engaged for the occasion, and was loaded with blankets, provender and cooking utensils. The reader is already acquainted with George and Ad. Charlie is engaged in persuading the enthusiastic Easterner to invest in San Diego real estate and is most successful in his vocation. He has a soft, persuasive voice, and a delightfully genteel manner, which are very captivating to the prospective purchaser and the customer who hesitates is lost. Added to all this he is a most enthusiastic sportsman and dearly loves a day with dog and gun, and is in that convenient condition of health which enables him to enjoy outdoor sports and gives him a good excuse for going whenever he feels like it. Ad and George had hunted together for years, and the manner of their introduction was so characteristic as to be worthy of relation. George told me about it. In reply to the question as to where he met Ad he said:

"On account of I was driving down Sixth street one day and I saw a new dog. I knowed every dog in town that was of any account, and when I see this one I knowed right away that it was a stranger. He was settin' out in front of one of the little places along there sunnin' himself. 'Whoa!' says I. You know how

old Pat loves to stop? Well, he jest put his hindfeet in front of his forard ones and there he stood. Ad's mother was out there and I looked the dog over and then I took off my hat and says 'Good morning.' 'Good morning,' says she, kind o' surprised like. 'On account of that's a nice looking dog,'' says I. 'Is he yourn?' 'No,' says she, 'it's my son's.' 'What's his name?' says I, meanin' the dog.

" 'Ad P—,' says she.

" 'Come here, Ad,' says I, snapping my fingers and chirping to the dog. But the dog never paid no attention.

" 'Oh,' she says, 'that's my son's name. The dog's name is——.'

"I felt like a farmer at that, but I tried to call the dog again, and just then Ad came out. He kind o' sized me up and I kind o' returned the compliment, and then I says, 'Is that your dog?'

" 'Yes,' says he.

" 'Want to sell 'er?' says I.

" 'Nop,' says he.

" 'Is she as good as she looks?' says I.

" 'You bet she is,' says he, 'and a good deal better.'

" 'What's she good fur?' says I.

" 'Quail, ducks, geese. Anything you're a mind to,' says he.

" 'On account o' this 's a nice day,' says I, 'what do you say to trying a little shoot?'

"He kind o' thought a second or two, and then says: 'Well, I've got a little work that I ought to do, but I guess it'll wait till to-morrow. Wait a minute.'

"With that he steps into the house, throwed on a shell coat, grabbed up a bag of loaded shells in one hand and his gun in the other and come out and jumped into the wagon, whistled to the dog, and off we went to my house to get my traps.

" 'That's the kind of a fellow I like to go with,' says I to myself, 'always ready.'

" 'Is that your name on the wagon?' says Ad.

" 'Yep,' says I. 'And I know your name. That lady out there in front, your mother, I guess, told me.'

" 'What kind o' dog you got?' says Ad.

" 'Ain't got but three now. Two setters and a retriever.'

"So we went on down to the house, I threw in my shooting traps and off we went, and him and me's shot together a good deal ever since."

That was their introduction, and it was characteristic of these big-hearted, honest sons of nature.

Ads Trixy, a cross between a setter and spaniel, Charlie's Dee, George's King and Queen and Chic constituted the roll call of dogs that frolicked along beside the wagons, all except the first being pointers. On we went up through El Cajon up over the Santa Maria grade, through Nuevo, and still on up into the mountains until we pulled up at Frank Hill's ranch in the Valle de los Viejos. It was well on in the afternoon when we reached there and we put out our tired horses and prepared to rest with our hospitable friend for the night. The first place we were invited to visit was Frank's wine cellar, and there was enough of the fresh, pure, home-made vintage of the grape to have cheered an army. It was still a long time until dark, and Ad and I took our guns and went out after a few doves or quails, or almost anything else that happened to come our way. Doves were not very plentiful, but we soon had enough to make a bountiful breakfast and returned to the house. There we found George trying to ride a meek and lowly burro. He was so lowly, that George had to tuck up his feet on either side to keep them from dragging the ground. The burro was all right with a pack, but he resented the indignity of having a man astride his back, in every way that suggested itself to his long-eared majesty. It was a regular circus performance until finally George stood on his head in the dust and then he gave it up. The evening was passed in cheerful conversation, and we retired early so as to be ready for a start before the sun was up in

the morning. Morning came and found us ready. Our goods had all been unpacked from the wagons the night before and were now repacked on the backs of four patient burros which were to carry them up the mountain for us. We had a long, hard climb before us. It was up hill every step, and in many places very steep at that. Charlie killed a rattler and laid it upon an ant's nest, saying that the ants would eat it up. Sure enough when we came back that way a few days later there was nothing left of the snake. Charlie swore the ants had carried it down into their nest, and no one could deny it. We were plodding wearily along when suddenly Ad gave a cry like an Indian and clapped his hand to his leg. We all crowded around him and asked what was the matter.

"A tarantula," said he. "He bit me right here."

"Get your clothes off, quick," said Charlie, while George made a rush for the "choke-bore," which was carried along for snake bites. Hurriedly removing his unmentionables Ad disclosed a small, red spot that looked like a bite, sure enough, and made a grab for the bottle.

"Hold on," said George, "let's see that tarantula first."

"For heaven's sake, do you want me to die? Don't you see the mark? Give me that bottle," pleaded Ad.

"On account o' you might 'a' done that with a pin," replied George. "Let's see the tarantula." A search was begun which soon disclosed a large, red ant which had been crushed by Ad in his frantic slap when he first felt its sting. These ants are no laughing matter. They are about three-quarters of an inch in length and are very large and armed with powerful mandibles, or nippers, and are capable of giving quite a painful wound.

There is nothing dangerous about them, however, and we indulged in a good laugh at Ad's expense when we discovered the cause of his excitement.

A little farther up Charlie exclaimed:

"Look at Dee!"

We all looked and discovered Charlie's stanch pointer on a gamy stand on a side hill a little to the right.

"Mountain quail," said George.

We all had our guns handy, and in a very few minutes were struggling up the hill toward the dog. Chic and Trixy came rushing in. Chic backed beautifully, while Trixy, true to his name, crept cautiously forward and stole the point. King and Queen were tired. I had never shot any mountain quail, although I had often seen them, and was quite anxious to get my first bird. Soon there was a rush and a roar and about forty of the beauties sprang into the air. Like the sound of musketry firing came the eight reports from four guns. Six birds fell. The bird at which I had aimed with my first barrel was among those that fell, and, elated at my success, I was about to pick it up when George coolly put it in his pocket saying:

"Well! if I didn't shoot this bird a'most to pieces!"

The bird was badly shot up and fully bore out my claim that if he shot at it then we must have both hit it, for I was certain that I had not missed it. George good-naturedly allowed the claim and Ad generously said that he knew he had missed with one barrel, so that I must have got one bird anyway. I was the poorest shot in the outfit as was indicated by the nickname that I bore, which was that of "Kid." It was of George's bestowing. The boys, therefore, were not as technical with me as they were with each other, and many a bird went into my bag which, while I was confident that I must have hit it, one or the other was equally confident that he had brought it down, with the chances, I must confess, largely in his favor.

The birds flew over an almost inaccessible cliff, and as we were anxious to get to camp, we did not follow them. The mountain quail is almost the exact counterpart, as to color, of the valley quail. The only difference to the hunter is in the size, the mountain quail being nearly twice the size of his valley cousin. Naturalists discover other minor differences, such as in the number

of feathers in the top-knot, etc. The mountain quail, as his name indicates, lives at a higher altitude than the valley quail, where the Winters are colder and the Summers warmer. He is a hardier bird, although he cannot carry off any more shot than his little relative. His habits are nearly the same as the valley bird, but he is not found in such large bands as the latter. There is also considerable difference in the call of the two birds. The larger bird is more wary and is found in places that make his pursuit much more difficult and therefore make him more highly prized. Both are excellent for the table, but not nearly so finely flavored as their Eastern relative, the Bob White.

Returning to the train of burros, which had been left in charge of our colored factotum, we resumed our climb. It was lovely weather. The pure mountain air was refreshing and bracing. The gigantic oak and pine trees on every hand cast grateful shade and made the air rich with their perfume. The scenery was grand beyond description. Our path often ran along the edge of a precipice where a misstep meant certain destruction on the rocks hundreds of feet below, but our sure-footed burros never wavered. They carried their packs as nonchalantly along these dangerous steeps as though they were on level ground. The sun was dipping below the western hills when George, who was in the advance, cried out:

"The Lagunas!"

It was a welcome hail to all of us. Hastily pushing to the front we looked where George pointed and saw a small sheet of water stretched out before us. It was still quite a distance away, but the path was plain and the grade now almost on a level. Charlie now undertook the direction of the enterprise, for he had been there several times before and knew where the best camping places were. Under his guidance we soon found ourselves unloading our burros under the spreading branches of a large live oak tree. Not more than twenty feet away stood a huge rock and from its feet burst

a living spring of the sweetest, purest water. How many centuries that spring had sent its bright product singing to the lake I know not, but it had hollowed out for itself a basin at the foot of the rock large enough to dip a bucket in and bring it out full of water. The traps unpacked and the ammunition and all supplies that would be injured by exposure to dampness having been cared for, we left Solomon to stake out the burros and get supper while we inspected our surroundings. We were camped about forty yards from the lake with trees and forest undergrowth between. Walking carelessly down to the water to take a look around we were suddenly surprised to hear the rush of wings, and with a great clatter a bunch of mallards rose. They were feeding right at the edge of the lake and we had not seen them, nor they us, on account of the undergrowth mentioned. Hastily swinging our guns into position they belched forth a royal salute to those royal birds and four of them concluded to stay with us. There was no chance for an argument with George this time, for, in answer to our inquiries as to why he had not shot, he reluctantly acknowledged that his gun was not cocked. George shot an L. C. Smith; so did Charlie, but Ad shot a Parker. George was always claiming that his gun was not cocked, but I have a well defined suspicion that he forgot to shove up the safety He looked very sorrowfully at the ducks that Chic and Trixy brought in, for they were the only dogs that would retrieve from water, and "cussed" his gun. If there is anything that George loves better than a beautiful greenhead it is two or three greenheads. "Laguna" is the Spanish word for "lake," and the Lagunas were nothing but two small lakes way up in the mountains, connected with each other by a small strip of marshy land where the water was about knee deep in the Spring and nothing but marsh later on. It made a passage way for the ducks, however, and in flying from one lake to another they almost always flew over this strip. At the time we were there there was a very

little water running in the center of the strip, perhaps eighteen inches wide and about six inches deep, while on either side of this small connection between the two little lakes spread acres and acres of marsh of black loam that the jacksnipe loves so well. At the sound of our guns there was a tremendous commotion Quack, quack, quack, resounded from every direction; the air was full of ducks and from the opposite side of the lake came the well-known and dearly loved honk of the wild goose. We had not expected to find any of them, as it was yet a little early for them in that latitude, and so we were somewhat surprised. We watched them as they strung out in a line as though starting for a long flight, but suddenly they seemed to change their minds and veered around toward the other lake, where, after circling several times, they finally settled. We were very hungry and rather tired, and concluded to go back and see what Solomon had for us, fully satisfied from what we had already seen that we were in for some splendid shooting. Broiled mountain quail with bacon, fried chicken, being some young ones presented by our good friend Hill, fried potatoes, fried onions, bread and butter with guava jelly, and a demijohn of splendid white wine from the cellar before mentioned, completed a repast that a lot of hungry hunters and hungry dogs could well do justice to. Having eaten as only men free from all cares and with appetites sharpened by mountain air and unwonted exercise can eat, we filled our pipes, enjoyed a short smoke and rolled ourselves up in our blankets for the night.

CHAPTER XVIII

Camp Life.

It seemed as though I had just got nicely to sleep when I was aroused by a yell and cries of misery. Hastily rolling out of my blanket in company with the other boys, who had also been awakened by the same sounds, we were soon made aware that Solomon was in some dire distress.

"For de Lawd's sake, gen'lmen, help! Fire! Murder!"

Poor Solomon was dancing frantically around scratching and clawing at different parts of his anatomy. In his haste in arousing himself he had thrown off his blanket and one corner of it lay smoldering in the fire, from which I rescued it.

"What's the matter?" we asked in chorus, not being able to discern anything wrong.

"Oh, Lawd! I's all afire! Somethin' 's eatin' me up! Dey's a tousan' tarant'las an' cent'pedes crawlin' all ober me."

Telling Solomon to stand on the blanket we had him disrobe completely, and the cause of his plight was immediately discovered. He had gone to sleep upon a nest of ferocious army ants and his black body was nearly covered with the insects which had undoubtedly started in to serve him as their relatives did the snake. They had begun to tear him to pieces, and that they meant business was evidenced from the countless number of little red blotches all over his body. From some of them the blood was oozing. When we found that it was nothing more serious we began to give our faithful servitor the laugh. George pretended to think he was wounded to the death and jumped in frantic haste to

get the "snake-bite." Whether by mistake or intentionally, he produced a bottle of ammonia that Charlie had brought along for mosquito bites and also as an antidote for snake poison. Thrusting this under Solomon's nose he hastily removed the cork, at the same time bidding the sufferer to take a good swallow. Solomon grabbed the bottle and took a swallow of the stuff before he noticed that it was not what he thought, and then set up such a pitiful howl as would have moved the heart of a savage.

"Oh, I's dead, suah," he groaned. "Dat's poison. Dat's bedbug poison. I reconize it," and, feeling that his last hour had come, he sank down on the blanket in despair. Realizing by this time that the poor fellow was actually in great pain, we began to take active steps to relieve him. Ad and I began rubbing him with the ammonia, taking generous quantities in the palm of the hand and rubbing it thoroughly into the skin. George produced the genuine remedy, sampled it first himself to be sure that there was no mistake, and also to reassure Solomon, and then administered a large dose to the sufferer. Charlie stood by and administered religious consolation to the writhing darky, telling him that all good negroes went straight to Paradise, that we would see that his family did not suffer, etc. Three large doses of the stimulant, administered with very little interval between them, soon had a drowsy effect upon our patient, and he mistook the approach of sleep for his final dissolution and began to pray. Among other things he exclaimed:

"O Lawd, bress Mistah M—, who done gib me dis year bedbug poison. Doan visit on him de iniquity ob his sins, but allow him ter come inter de fold. But befo' he comes in, Lawd, make him to lie down in a bumblebee's nest and den po' some running fire down his throat so's he kin tas'e a little o' what he done gib me."

Under the influence of the rubbing, which assuaged the pain of the bites, together with the remedy, he soon fell asleep. We wrapped him up in his blankets, re-

moved to a safe distance from the ant's nest, and left him.

We had scarcely dropped off to sleep again when we were again awakened by the most horrible noise that could be imagined. It sounded like a combined saw-

"SO CLOSE THAT I FELT THE BREATH OF THE MONSTER."

mill and calliope, and whistled and groaned like a thousand fiends in terrible torture. We had arranged ourselves around the tree with our heads to the tree and lying in different directions so as to guard all points of the compass. At this unearthly noise I came up bolt upright with my gun at a "present." As I

opened my eyes they nearly started out of my head. I felt my hair, what there is of it, begin to rise. Little chills chased each other up and down my spinal column, and altogether I felt very uncomfortable. Right in front of my face was a huge open mouth, so close that I felt the breath of the monster. Surmounting this were two monstrous eyes that shone in the fire light with a ghastly glitter, while just above the eyes two objects flapped back and forth like monster bats. Wakened from a sound sleep it was enough to give anyone a chill. A second look, however, showed me that it was one of those pesky burros. He had pulled up the stake pin to which he had been tethered and wandered off. Missing his companions he doubtless thought he had discovered them sleeping by the fire and sought to announce his coming. With my first impulse I drove my clenched fist against his nose with sufficient force to cut short the hideous bray with which he was awakening the affrighted echoes, and then, with muttered anathemas against the whole donkey tribe, I led him a little way off and tied him to a tree. Solomon slept peacefully through the racket. "On account of that's worse than a snake-bite," muttered George, as he hunted for the bottle.

As the darkness was just graying into dawn we silently arose, put on our shell coats, filled the pockets with sixes and fives, took our decoys and moved down toward the lakes. We had had so many awakenings the preceding night that none of us felt very talkative, and our arrangements having been completed the night before, not much talking was necessary. We left Solomon still sleeping off the effects of his potations. Going down to the water Charlie went off to the right bank of the smaller lake, which led to the west of the other one. George took the east side of the larger lake and had a tramp of about a mile to make. Ad took up his position where the little channel which connected the two lakes entered the eastern lake, and I took up my place where the same channel entered the smaller

lake, and I took up my place where the same channel entered the smaller lake. George and Charlie were to shoot off the two lakes, and were to use the decoys; Ad and I expected to make it interesting for such ducks as attempted to fly along the pass from one lake to the other. There was absolutely no cover where I was stationed, so I took along a few rushes and small branches of bushes. These I stuck in the soft marsh in two short rows a few feet apart, and pulled some of the marsh grass and wove it into the branches. The blind thus made was not more than thirty inches high, and was as inconspicuous as possible. I had a piece of a rubber blanket about two feet square, which I folded up and carried in my pocket. Unfolding this I spread it out near me and bade Chic to lie down. She needed no second bidding, for she knew very well what that was for. In cold weather I covered the rubber with cloth or with straw. We were hardly settled when I heard two sharp reports from Charlie's direction. I strained my eyes, but could see nothing. Suddenly the whiz of wings told me that the birds had passed close enough for a shot, but it was still so dark that I had not seen them. A couple of sharp reports from Ad's gun told me that they had paid toll to that indefatigable sportsman. He can almost see in the dark. At the sound of the first discharge pandemonium seemed to have broken loose. There was a terrible quacking and flapping of wings in the direction of Charlie's stand. The air was vocal with the protestations of the indignant and frightened birds. At last, straining my eyes through the fast waning gloom, I saw a few black dots approaching. Before I had realized that they were really ducks they had passed me. I concluded that that would never do, and as another lot of black specks immediately became visible I leveled Little Nell at them and as soon as they assumed a respectable size I pulled the trigger. The air was heavy in the early morning, and although I was shooting my favorite nitro powder, the smoke of the

first barrel hung in the air to such an extent that the second barrel was fired almost at random. About a second later, and before the smoke had cleared away, I received a sound thump in the breast and found myself flat on my back in the marsh. Chic got out of the way in a hurry. The cause of my predicament was a three and a half pound greenhead which had been killed dead in the air and had pitched straight at me. It must have been flying like a bullet when it was struck; I am confident it was flying like a cannon ball when I was struck. That was a style of retrieving that I did not at all relish, but I scrambled up instantly, ready to do more business with the birds.

It was now getting light enough to see very well, and the birds were coming in a stream from both directions. I kept constantly turning my head from one direction to the other and still some of them would get right over, and even past me, before I saw them. I did no retrieving. Birds which fell crippled were immediately shot over again if within range. To have tried to retrieve or to have had Chic retrieve would have frightened away the birds that were coming so rapidly. The rapid and almost continuous fire from the other guns told me that the other boys were enjoying as good sport as I was. It was a fortunate thing for those birds that some of those writers who never miss did not occupy my place that morning. As it was I got more birds than I wish I had. The sun was well up in the heavens when Charlie, who was the only one I could see, sung out that it was time to quit. I was willing, for the demands of an always vigorous appetite were beginning to be so imperative as to need attention.

Laying down the gun I began to retrieve the dead birds, at the same time giving Chic the command, "Dead bird; fetch!" Walking with her we soon picked up two birds, and instead of taking her bird from her as she brought it to me, I said: "Take it to camp," at the same time motioning her to heel and walking back to the blind. Arrived there I dropped my bird on the

ground and bade her drop her bird near mine. This was repeated three or four times, when she picked up a bird, looked at me with a wag of her tail, showing plainly that she understood what was wanted, ran to the blind with it and dropped it on the pile. The rest was easy. I walked leisurely around, picking up now and then a bird, while Chic worked like a beaver.

Tying my birds together in six bunches I slung two of the bunches over my shoulders, took two in my hand and laid the other two across Chic's back and started for camp. It was sticky and hard walking. At every step I sank from six to eight inches in the muck. Suddenly a "scaipe! scaipe!" sounded to my right, and a little brown flash went zigzagging away over the marsh. The instinct of the sportsman is strong within me. At that welcome sound, forgetting how heavily I was loaded down with birds, forgetting the thick, sticky muck through which I was walking, forgetting everything except that fleeing brown beauty, I dropped the birds in my left hand, brought down the gun and essayed to turn sharply to my right to get aim at the jacksnipe. Alas for good intentions. I should have allowed for that sticky soil—but I did not. My feet stuck in the mud and as I threw my body around my feet refused to leave the soft soil with sufficient celerity to keep my body company. This threw me out of balance, and I felt myself falling backward and to the right. In vain I tried to right myself. The ducks hanging on my shoulders swung out and increased the leverage and assisted in pulling me down, and finally, as easily and gracefully as ever lady seated herself in cozily upholstered parlor, I sank to rest in that soft, black mud and water. And that was not all of it. My feet still stuck in the mud; there was just enough water there so that in my sitting posture I could feel it running into the tops of my hip boots. To raise myself from that position without something in front to pull on, or something back of me to push on, was impossible. There was nothing in front but grass and mud; to put my

lovely little gun down into the mud back of me and push on it to help myself out was not to be thought of. The water was running into my boots all this time, and there was no time to hesitate. These thoughts passed through my head in far less time than it takes to read them, and I deliberately rolled over, twisted my feet out of the mud, got up with the aid of my hands and knees and finally got on my feet. But, oh, what a sight! I had fairly wallowed in that soft, black muck in order to get out of it! When I put my hands down they sank to the elbows, and I was plastered with mud from head to foot. About this time Ad and George came upon the scene.

"What ye doing there, Kid?" asked Ad.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" laughed George. "Takin' a mud bath, eh? On acount I've heard that's good fer rheumatism. Got the rheumatism, Kid?"

"Shut up!" growled I.

"He thinks this is Tia Juana," explained Ad. "He's heard of the mud baths down there and thinks this is just as good."

"On account o' ain't there some kind o' animal that likes to wallow in the mud?" queried George. "Seems to me I've heard o' something o' that sort. Give 'em nice, clean straw and they'll leave it and go out and roll in the mud. What kind o' animal is that Kid? Come, you're a naturalist."

I gripped my gun a little harder and strode along in dignified silence. But I resolved to go out that afternoon and kill all the jacksnipes there were in the marsh, that is, if they would fly straight enough so I could hit them, and not tell those fellows anything about them. I knew how well they loved jacksnipes and knew of no better way to punish them. Arrived at the camp where we expected to find breakfast ready for us, we found a soundly sleeping darky. He had not yet recovered from the effects of George's liberal doses of medicine.

"On account of he won't get no more," declared George. "I don't think it's good for him."

We went to work and soon got up a delicious breakfast, which, it is needless to say, we heartily enjoyed. After breakfast we drew our birds and sat around smoking and telling of the incidents of the morning.

CHAPTER XIX

More Camp Life.

Solomon awoke about 10 o'clock with a terrible headache. He looked as though he had been drawn through a thrashing machine. He got dinner for us in a sullen, indifferent sort of a way.

After our mid-day meal had had time to get a little settled and accommodate itself to its new quarters, I began to think about those jacksnipes. I was just communing with myself whether I should carry out my intention of going out and slaughtering them all by myself or whether I should tell the boys. My clothes had dried, I had scraped the thickest of the mud off of them and washed it off of my hands and face, and consequently did not feel so vindictive toward the boys for their lack of sympathy. Just as I had about made up my mind to tell them and suggest that we go out after a few snipes George looked at me mischievously and grunted a couple of times, like a hog! That settled it! He should not have one of those jacks! I had fully come to this conclusion when George remarked:

"On account of I've got something to tell you, Kid."

"Well, what is it?" I asked.

"Do you know what is the best game bird that flies?"

"Don't know as I do. What is it?"

"W-well, on account that it's a jacksnipe, every time."

"Why are they the best bird that flies?" I asked.

"Because they're so gamy. Just see how they dart out from under your feet, s——" (here George gave a

first-class imitation of the cry of the jacksnipe) "and away he goes zigzag, criss-cross, up an' down, an' you're a dandy if you hit him. And then take about a dozen of 'em, broil 'em carefully and tenderly before wood coals, but don't cook 'em too much, cut the breast open a little on each side and slip in a slice of butter, put on a little pepper and salt and—m-m-m—Yum! Yum! Yum!!" George's recollections of gastronomical pleasures here proved too much for him and he closed his eyes and moved his head slowly from side to side in a way that graphically expressed his total inability to do justice to the subject in words.

"Yes," said Charlie, reflectively and profoundly, "jacksnipes are a mighty nice kind of game. Learning to shoot jacks might well be called putting the finishing touches on a sportsman's education in the field. I consider jacksnipe shooting the acme of the sportsman's skill, and when a man gets so he can get four out of five of them, then a quail, duck or prairie chicken has got a mighty poor show with him. I've heard fellows tell how easy it was to shoot jacksnipes, and how they'd get so fat that they would break open like a big, heavy goose, when they fell. Of course if a bird gets as fat as that he's bound to be 'logy' and to fly slowly, but I never saw any of them like that. I've shot a good many jacksnipes and all I ever got I had to shoot as though I was out of meat in order to get them. As for eating—give me a jacksnipe every time."

"Well, let's go and get some and not sit here talking about them," cried Ad., springing to his feet. He could not stand it any longer.

"Do you know where there are any?" I asked, hypocritically.

"Know where there are any?" queried Ad. derisively. "I should say I did! Oodles of 'em! Oodles, oodles of 'em."

Ad. was getting excited. When he said "oodles of 'em" you might know that the number was beyond

computation. With that we all sprang to our feet. George's dissertation, coupled with his graphic description of the mode of cooking them, and his expressive pantomime conveying a faint idea of the delights of eating them, backed up by Charlie's remarks, had given us all a jacksnipe fever. I had never been very successful in shooting jacksnipes. I had had but one or two opportunities, and at those times I found myself constantly shooting "zig" just as the bird went "zag," and the result was always mortifying. To feel that you have shot about eight or ten feet behind the bird you thought you were going to hit is not very gratifying. With men in our situation it was the work of only a very few moments to get ready. We had only to throw on our shell coats, change our shells from sixes and fives to eights and nines, and there we were. It seems that Ad. and George had tramped over a good share of the marshy ground heretofore described in going to and coming from their blinds, and where I had seen only one jacksnipe they had seen a great many —"oodles of 'em," as Ad. said. Having reached the ground, which was only a few rods from our camp, we deployed in such a way as to cover the most ground, and advanced upon our alert but unsuspecting victims. The first thing George's puppy Queen did was to straighten out on a fine point, and the first thing George's puppy King did was to rush in and flush the bird that Queen was pointing. Then there was music in the air. Queen was not to be outdone by King in that kind of style. Her royal blood was roused and she sailed in after King, and both dogs chased that jacksnipe as though their lives depended on catching it. As they ran, snipe after snipe arose from their pathway and flew off, protesting against the rude invasion. George roared at his dogs at the top of his voice; but they did not know him at all. He called, shouted and whistled, but all to no purpose. At last he sent a load of nines after King and caught him nicely. King tucked his tail between his legs and came sneaking

back. As he got within range of George's number nine boots his master swung one of them viciously in his direction; the dog dodged, George's foot slipped and he sat down in that soft mud and water with a splash that sent the dirt flying in every direction. Now he was in the same fix that I was. He couldn't get up without getting still more mud on himself. I surveyed my prostrate tormentor in delight.

"Here, Kid, give me a hand," said he, stretching out one hand to me.

I struck an attitude and mused: "On account o' ain't there some kind o' animal that likes to wallow in the mud? Give 'em nice, clean straw and they'll leave it and go out and roll in the mud. Ain't you a naturalist, George? Tell me what kind of an animal that is."

George was mad clear through, but he couldn't help but laugh.

"Come, quit that," he said, "and help me out of this."

I relented, took his outstretched hand, and gave him a lift, and pulled him up, and then we were square. By this time Ad. and Charlie, off to our right, were having splendid shooting. Dee was pointing in fine style, the boys were shooting well and Trixy was in his glory retrieving. George and I had hardly got out of the mess just described when a jacksnipe got up just in front of me and went corkscrewing away, rasping out that defiant call of his. As usual I shot two large, solemn holes in the atmosphere at each side of my fleeing tormentor, and then felt like kicking myself.

"Hold on, Kid," exclaimed George. "That won't do. Those fellows will have four birds to our one if you keep on shooting that way."

"I know it," said I, "but what of it? I never could hit these fellows, anyway."

"They're just as easy to hit as any other bird if you hold right on 'em," replied George.

"Oh, yes," I replied, sarcastically, "if a fellow always held right he'd never miss at all."

"Yes, but let me tell you. Now there's plenty of

birds here and the next one that gets up we won't either of us shoot at it; but you just watch it and notice how it flies."

"All right," said I.

In a few minutes a bird got out almost under our feet. There was an instinctive motion of George's gun and then his arm dropped again. We watched the bird until he settled.

"Now," said George, "on account o' what did you see?"

"What did I see? Why, I saw a bird flying on the line of a rail fence and going like a streak."

"Yes, but didn't you notice that when that bird got about twenty-five yards away he quit corkscrewin' and flew straight away?"

"By George, I didn't notice that, but now that you mention it I remember that that is what he did."

"Well," said George, "all you've got to do is to be a little patient. Hold your fire until the bird settles down and then give it to him. The shots are a little long, some of them, but otherwise they are no harder than on any other bird. We are going across wind, too. We'd better swing around and go down the wind. You see, a snipe, like all water birds, always rises against the wind. If we hunt down the wind then the snipe sees us coming, but in order to fly he has got to fly straight toward us for a little distance. On account that he hates to do this he will lie there a great deal longer than he will if we are approaching from any other direction and we will not get such long shots. Another thing, when the bird has the wind at its back he does not corkscrew so much as when he is going against it. That corkscrewing is the same as a ship tacking on the water; he does it to avoid going dead in the teeth of the wind. Now the next bird that gets up, don't you shoot at it at all. Just watch me. On account of I may not hit it, but I can show you how it ought to be done. You know lots of times it's a

whole lot easier to show a fellow how a thing ought to be done than it is to do it yourself."

It was only a moment before a bird got out a little to George's left. He went corkscrewing away, and when about twenty-five or thirty yards distant he settled down into a straightaway, just as George had said. He had hardly settled into his steady flight when George's gun cracked and the snipe fell all in a heap, killed dead in the air.

"See?" inquired George.

I saw.

"It seems very strange," I remarked, "that I never thought of that before."

"Nothing strange about it," replied George. "You're simply like everyone else that shoots jacksnipes. The very cry of the bird has something aggravating about it. And then it gets up so boldly, goes off with such a swagger and such a challenging, defiant cry, that a fellow naturally gets in a hurry to put the gun on him and pull the trigger. Everyone has to learn. A beginner will naturally shoot quicker at a jacksnipe than at any other bird, while he should do quite the contrary; that is, he should wait longer than on almost any other bird. Now the next one that gets up, you take him. Don't be afraid of his getting too far away for your gun; that little gun of yours will get 'em when they're clear out of sight, if you point it right."

While we had been talking Chic had retrieved the bird that George shot and brought it to us. As we moved on a bird got out from in front of me and went away slightly quartering to my right. Then I found out the truth of what George had been saying. I had been shooting too quickly before. Two or three times my finger twitched and it was all that I could do to keep from shooting; but finally the bird settled down into his steady flight, I pressed the trigger, and at the report of my gun the bird went down, all in a heap.

"Good shot, Kid," cried George, encouragingly. "On

account of that I knowed you could do it all right if someone would only just put you on."

With that we separated a little and began shooting in earnest. In a moment George shot another bird and I sent Chic to retrieve it. She found the bird, handled it daintily and tenderly, and brought it to me.

"TAKE IT TO HIM!"

"Take it to him," said I, motioning to George.

She looked at me and then looked at George.

"Take it to him," said I, repeating the motion. She started and ran to George with the bird, but stopped a few feet from him and again looked around at me.

"Call her, George," said I. At the same time I repeated the command and motion.

"Fetch, Chic," said George, holding out his hand.

Chic gave him the bird with evident reluctance and looked around at me with drooping ears and tail, as

though she feared she had done wrong. I motioned her to me and petted her and praised her a little. At the first opportunity this was repeated until Chic would take the bird to George without hesitation, upon being commanded to do so. I think she soon learned the difference between his birds and mine, too, for when I shot a bird and told her to retrieve it she would go and get it and bring it back at once without waiting to be beckoned in or told to "fetch" after she had the bird in her mouth; but when George shot the bird and she was told to retrieve, she would run for the bird, take it in her mouth and then look around at me inquiringly and wait for the motion before she took it to George.

The sun was getting low in the west when we, tired, wet and bedraggled with mud, struggled into camp. We drew our birds, cleaned our guns, had supper and sat around smoking before bedtime. I looked at the big heap of game and felt conscience-stricken that we had killed so many birds that we had no use for.

"What shall we do with our birds, boys?" I asked.

"Blamed if I know," answered Ad. "We can't eat them all."

"It's a shame to kill so many birds when we have no use for them," said I.

"I think so, too," said George. "It does seem a shame to take the life of that we cannot give back, just for the fun of the thing, don't it?"

"After this let's not shoot so many," suggested Charlie.

To this we all agreed, but that did not solve the problem of what to do with those we had already shot. Finally George inquired:

"On account o' that wine we got from the ranch—that's all gone, ain't it?" (We told him it was.) "Well, on account o' that's pretty good wine, don't you think?"

We all thought so.

"Well," continued George, "on account of what's the matter with having Solomon take these birds down

to Hill's to-morrow? We can tie them up in separate bunches and mark 'em for our friends in town. By getting an early start Solomon can get down to the ranch before the stage goes by and can throw them on the stage and they'll get to town by night and will be all right. If we keep them here they'll spoil before we can use 'em. And then, while he's there, Solomon can fill up the demijohn again."

"On account that there's that other demijohn that we brought along for water," said Ad., "we're so near this spring that we don't need it, and two demijohns will balance better than one. "Yes," he argued, as he saw us all smile, "you see he can tie them together with a short rope and throw them over the back of the burro and come along as easy as you please."

George never said a word, but got up and patted Ad. on the shoulder. So it was agreed, and we began sorting out the birds into bunches and tying them together with a card on each bunch, bearing the name of some friend in town. This done we prepared to turn in for the night. At this juncture Solomon was seen going around with his blanket over his shoulder looking anxiously on the ground, as though he had lost something.

"What are you looking for, Solomon?" inquired Charlie.

"Well, Mistah G—, to tell de truf, I's lookin' for another ant's nest," said Solomon, with a broad grin.

George had a way of winking, during which operation he would draw his mouth around in the most inconceivable position and contort his face in a terrible manner. It was equivalent to saying: "That's a good shot! Did you hear it?" As apothecary to the party and Great Keeper of the Medicine Chest, he knew that this hint was meant for him, and he said, meditatively: "Anyone that wouldn't take a hint like that wouldn't take a tumble if a load of No. 1 shot were put clean through him," and he produced the medicine.

CHAPTER XX

Camp-Fire Stories.

Ad. did the cooking the next day, while I acted as second cook. George looked after the burros and dogs, while Charlie was general adviser and provider for the camp. He had a snap! Solomon took his departure early in the morning, and we were left to run the camp without his valuable assistance. The day passed quietly and without incident. Supper had been disposed of and we were sitting around our bright campfire enjoying our pipes, when the conversation turned upon railroad wrecks.

"Were you ever in a wreck, George?" asked I.

"Was I ever in a wreck?" replied he, scornfully. "Was I ever in a wreck? Well I should say I was in a wreck! On account o' that time me an' my wife went back to Pennsylvania on a visit, you remember, an' when we was comin' back we had the worst imitation of a wreck that you ever saw. We were comin' through Kansas an' it was jest gittin' gray in the morning. I was a sleepin' about forty knots an hour, an' a tearin' calico to beat the band. All of a sudden the car commenced to go rippity-rap, thumppity-thump, ku-chug, ku-chug, an' I kind o' thought somethin' was wrong, so I partly woke up. I found myself going right up in the air, and when I got about half way to the top of the car I met my wife comin' down. We come down together and was all mixed up for about a second, then I rolled out of the berth onto the floor. I hadn't more'n struck the floor when a big, fat fellow rolled out of the berth on the opposite side of the car and come down

right on top of me. Was I ever in a wreck? I thought I was wrecked beyond redemption then, sure! Then a woman in the next berth found out that something had happened and you ought to 'a' heard her screech! I never heard nothing like it! She rushed out of her berth with a corset in one hand and a shoe in the other, an' left her gold watch an' all her jewelry an' other clothes in the berth, an' started for the door. But that fat man was in the way, as fat men always are," continued George, with a severe look in my direction, "an' you ought to have seen that woman bowl him over! Well, we finally got out o' the car and found there wasn't anybody hurt very much, but that things were pretty badly mixed up. We had to wait quite a long while for the wrecking car to come and straighten us out, and I was standing around looking things over, when a green, gawky-looking fellow, about nineteen or twenty years old, come along and stopped by me and said:

" 'Had an accident?'

"There was one car standin' right across the track an' two cars lyin' on their sides, an' when the fellow asked me that question I just looked at him and said:

" 'No, we hadn't had no accident.'

" 'What's the matter then?' said he.

" 'Well, you see, on account o' there's a scientific party of fellows on board, the engineer jest wanted to show 'em what he could do with an engine without hurtin' no one. See?'

"The fellow kind o' looked at me as though he didn't know whether to believe me or not. Jest then I looked over toward the horizon and my blood commenced to dance right away; my trigger finger commenced a-workin' and I couldn't hardly stay there. There coming right for us, was the biggest band o' ducks you ever saw.

" 'Wasn't they nobody hurt?' said he.

" 'Where does the ducks come from?' said I.

" 'Over on the lake,' said he. 'How did it happen?'

" 'Where they goin' to?' said I.

" 'Down to the river to feed,' said he. 'What time did it happen?'

" 'Do they fly like this all the time?' said I, for they kept a-comin'.

" 'Most of the time,' said he. 'Which car was you in?'

" 'Say,' said I, 'how far is it where them birds is goin'? What do they feed on there? Is there any good blinds? Are they shot at much? Do the fellows around here hunt any? Have you got a gun? Have you got a dog? 'Spose we could git some o' those fellows before they fix up these cars?'

"Well, sir, would you believe it, that there fellow was so interested in them dum cars that when I fired a string of questions at him he jest looked at me as though he thought I was crazy, and walked off. Well, I was pretty near crazy, for to see so many old mallards and not be able to get a shot at them was enough to make anyone almost crazy. On account o' that's the only wreck I was ever in, an' that's enough," concluded George, as he addressed himself assiduously to his pipe, which had nearly gone out from lack of attention during his narrative.

"Do you remember that W— P—? asked Ad. of George. George replied, between whiffs. that he did.

"Well," said Ad., "one time him and me were out hunting down toward Chula Vista. We had been way out beyond there and had had pretty fair luck and were on our way home. It was pretty late and none too light. Our old horse seemed to have a decided objection to the road and kept wandering out of it all the time. It was along about nine o'clock in the evening, and it began to rain and was as dark as a stack o' black cats. There wasn't any fence along there and we couldn't see the road, and had to let the old horse go wherever he would. All of a sudden he stopped. We urged and urged him, but it was no use. He wouldn't budge another step. So I got out to see what was the matter. I felt my way along his side un-

til I got to his head. I felt of the harness, and everything seemed to be all right. Then I struck out to go around his head to the other side of him to finish my examination, and what do you think? I didn't do a thing but drop off a bank about ten feet high and light in the nice, soft mud at the bottom. The old horse had come right up to the edge of a deep ditch and had stopped there. Well, I was nicely covered with mud and slime, I tell you, and had a few cactus thorns in different parts of my body besides. P— sat there in the wagon with the rain pouring down on him. In that situation a fellow is not very apt to be patient. Pretty soon he called me. I never said a word. He called three or four times, and I didn't answer him at all. Then I heard him climbing out of the wagon. He came feeling along the side of the horse, same as I did, and I moved over a little to one side. I hadn't any more'n got out o' the way before here he come! He wasn't as lucky as I was. I lit on my feet, but he lit on his back and hands. I burst out laughing and I never saw a madder fellow in my life.

"'Why didn't you tell me?' said he.

"'What did I want to tell you for?' said I. 'No worse for you than it is for me, is it?'

"'You fool!' said he, 'I'll get even with you for this.'

"'Humph!' said I, 'we're even now,' and I only laughed the harder.

"Well, we climbed back up that ditch, took our blankets out of the wagon, took out what gunny sacks we had, turned the old horse loose, and crawled under the wagon and made the best of a bad night. In the morning we got up and found that blasted road not more than fifteen yards from us."

"On account o' I must tell one on the Kid," exclaimed George, knocking the ashes out of his pipe as he spoke. I knew what was coming and prepared myself resignedly to listen to the exaggerated tale. "On account o' one time we was up to McKinnon's hunting ducks. We had a good blind out in the slough and was

havin' pretty fair shooting; but along through the middle of the day you know they don't come in very much. So along about noon we went up to the house. We had got out pretty early that mornin' an' had ferocious appetites. I was pretty hungry myself. On account of that, Mrs. McKinnon (she's one o' the best cooks you ever saw and she can git things up to the queen's taste). Well, that day she had chicken with dumplings. Nice, rich gravy that the Kid's so fond of, boiled potatoes and a lot of other things, but the Kid didn't take any notice of anything but them dumplings. One after another the folks excused themselves an' left the table, till they was nobody left but the Kid an' me. I tried my best to keep up with him, but it was no go. He had eaten jest thirteen o' them big dumplin's with lots of gravy, chicken, potatoes and other truck, an' there was jest one dumplin' left. The Kid heaved a long breath, shoved back his chair, looked at that there dumplin' kind o' longin'-like, and lookin' at me, he said:

" 'Be we goin' far this afternoon?'

" 'No,' says I, laughin', 'jest down to the blind,' and the Kid pulled up his chair and tackled that other dumplin'."

Then George looked around at me, grinned and drawled out: "Be we goin' fa-a-ar?" in a manner that was irresistible, and I couldn't help joining in the laugh. George started that story with six dumplings. He has got it up to twenty now, and the only limit is the credulity of his hearers. But I like to hear him tell the story as well as anyone else. It does him lots of good and does me no harm—for everyone knows George!

When the laugh had subsided I asked:

"How about those cranes, George?"

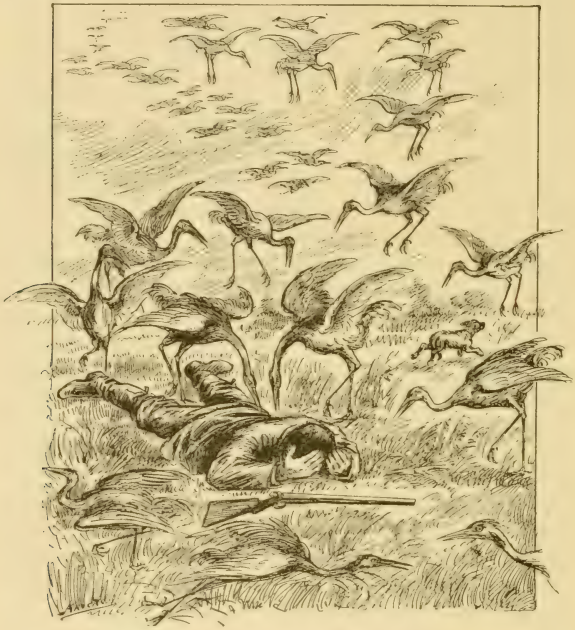
I was purely malicious in this, for everyone had heard that crane story, and up to that date no one had been found who believed it. George thoroughly believed it himself, however, for he had told it so many times that he thought it must be true.

"Oh, yes," said he, "on account o' I never told you

that story, did I? Well, you see, one time I was up to San' Marguerite after geese. I had seen lots of cranes flying around and, although they ain't much good to eat, I took a notion I wanted one or two. They are mighty hard birds to get. They are shy of the best kind of a blind and will not answer the very best imitation of their call. I have seen them decoy to goose decoys once or twice, but they can't be depended upon to decoy to the very best crane decoys. And fight! Did you ever hear of how them things could fight? On account of if some fellow had a good bulldog that he thought nothing could lick I'd jest like to make him a bet on it and go out and get a crippled crane down and see which'd lick! They'll tackle a man, too. Well, as I was sayin', I took a notion I wanted a crane. So I went out to where they had been flying around the evening before. I didn't know whether they would come to the same place again or not, but I had to take my chances. I set around there a while and waited. Pretty soon I heard a 'cu-r-r-r-r-o-o-o,' and I looked around and saw 'em comin'. There was a long string of 'em, and I hadn't no sooner spied 'em than I heard a call in another direction and looked around and see another band a-comin'. Pretty soon another band came in, and then another, and another. They was jest fillin' the air full o' themselves, but they wouldn't none of 'em come near enough to give me a shot. It was getting along toward dark. I had tried blinds, tried lying down on my back, and finally I hunted up a little hollow and got into that, face down, and waited. Of course the birds nearest me saw me get into it and they would not come near, but there were new ones coming in all the time, and I hoped to get a shot at them. I waited and waited. Their call is very deceptive and you are sure to think that they are a great deal nearer than they are. I didn't dare move my head, so I just laid there and listened. When I thought by the sound that some of them were near enough, I would jump up ready to shoot, but they were too far away each time.

There was no other fresh water anywhere near there, and so they kept circling around there. After I had laid there a long time—seemed to me like about two hours—jest as it was getting about dark enough to give up, a new band come swinging in calling and hollering. I waited and almost held my breath, for they were coming right over me. At last they were near enough. Up I jumped and gave them both barrels. I killed one dead with the first barrel and winged one with the second. I had Dukie with me and I sent him after that cripple. Dukie was a pretty good fighter and pretty gamy. He tackled that there crane, and the first thing old crane did was to just sink that there sharp bill of his about an inch into Dukie's back. Dukie let a yell out of him, but he went at him again all right. The crane kept a trying for Dukie's eyes, and finally gave Dukie a rap on the side of the head that jest missed his eye and sent him a rollin.' That was enough for Dukie, and you ought to have seen him fill the air full of himself gettin' out of there. Then I went for the cripple myself. I had no more than got started when I noticed the cranes coming around again, and coming lower and lower. The cripple was about seventy yards from me by this time, for in his fight with the dog he kept getting farther away, and the other cranes came and hovered right over him, filling the air with their musical cry. As I came up they shied off a bit, but didn't seem to be very much afraid. When I got up to the cripple they were right over me and I let go two barrels at them. I brought down more birds than I had calculated on. The two birds I shot at fell dead, but all the rest of them—and I think there must have been a thousand—with a peculiar, angry cry, swooped right at me. I was so surprised that I didn't have time to load my gun, and I jest clubbed my gun an' give it to 'em." (Here there was a gentle snore, but George didn't hear it, and continued:) "They kept a comin' and I kept a swingin' that gun and knockin' 'em right and left, but they came faster than I could knock 'em down.

Pretty soon I began to get tired and wanted to get away from there. At first I thought it was fun and I was having a great time with them, but now it began to get serious. My arms got weaker an' weaker, an' they kept crowding closer an' closer to my eyes until finally I had to drop the gun and jest keep them off with my



"THEY COMMENCED DRIVING AT MY HEAD AND EARS."

hands. I kept this up for a time and then I fell flat on the ground on my face with my hands over my eyes to protect them. On account of maybe you think them there cranes didn't have a picnic with me then. They jest danced a hornpipe all over my back and drove them bills of theirn into the sofest parts they could find, an' cu-r-r-r-o-o-o'd and hollered as though they

was celebratin' some great victory. When they commenced driving at my head and ears I thought it was all up with me and that they would kill me sure. I tried to holler, but I didn't have breath enough left. How long this lasted I don't know, but I thought it was hours. At last one big fellow drove his bill into the back of my head and I gave a yell that would have startled a ghost. Every bird went right up into the air! I could hardly believe my good luck! I peeped out from between my fingers and saw them circling a few feet above my head. I gathered my wind and gave another roar and they went higher yet. Then I jumped to my feet and waved my hands in the air, and jumped, and danced, and shouted as loud as I could, and you ought to have seen them cranes get out of there! On account of there ain't nothing that will frighten a wild bird or animal so quick as the sound of the human voice. Did you know that, Kid?"

Here he heard a suspicious sound as of a human voice, and paused. Looking at the recumbent forms of our two companions, and listening to the undoubted snores that proceeded from them, a look of pained embarrassment flitted across George's face, and he said:

"On account of them fellows don't believe that yarn, do they?"

"No, I guess they don't, George," said I, "but I believe it."

Then we fixed up the fire a little and turned in.

Solomon returned next day with the two demijohns of wine. One of them was not quite full, but Solomon was, and his clothing bore evidence of desperate battles with manzanita bushes, jagged rocks and other obstructions to his pathway. Another week was passed in this delightful camp, a week over which I would love to linger, but the object of this work will not permit, and then we packed our goods and returned to our homes.

CHAPTER XXI

A Change of Base.

Times had changed in San Diego. The great "boom" had come and gone, leaving many wrecked fortunes behind it. From a city of fully thirty thousand souls San Diego had shrunk to about sixteen thousand. Business continued growing more and more dull. One after another, many of my friends and acquaintances concluded that they could do better elsewhere and reluctantly turned their backs on the "City of Bay'n' Climate." I thought the matter over many months before I could make up my mind to leave the little city by the sea; the place where I had spent so many happy hours, where I was acquainted with every bush and stone, and where each familiar street and corner suggested memories of unalloyed pleasures. But business is business, and is very cold-blooded at that, and I at last concluded that I could make more money somewhere else than I could in San Diego. Having thought the matter over for some time, I finally concluded to try some place in some of our growing Western states, for I was still young enough to "grow up with the country."

Having settled up all my matters in San Diego and bid good-bye to a few of my most intimate friends, one morning at eight o'clock saw the train pulling out of the San Diego depot on the Santa Fe Railroad with the writer occupying a place in the Pullman. My ticket called for Denver, and where I should go after that I had no very well defined idea. Chic was in the baggage car. Flattery, bribery and all blandishments of

which I was capable had failed in the effort to smuggle her into the car with me. She wouldn't have done any more harm there than anybody else, and I know she would not have kept the whole car awake as some of the babies did. But it was no use; into the baggage-car she had to go. I had no trouble with the baggageman. The road allowed him a rate of one-quarter of a cent a mile and I paid it. I did not give him a chance to demand any more, nor did I offer him any less. Before the train started I found out the length of his run and had the exact change ready for him. I pursued this policy with all the baggagemen I encountered and had no trouble with any of them; quite the contrary, in fact, for I found them all very friendly and accommodating. I took my meals on the train, and when we came to an eating station I took Chic out for a run. The Santa Fe did not then run dining-cars, but they had a buffet most of the time. When I had to take my meals at the eating houses I always found someone to lead Chic with the chain while I snatched a hurried lunch and then went out and took off the chain and let her run. Now I think I hear someone exclaim: "What! Did you take off the chain and let her run around in those perfectly strange places where you had to get her aboard the car at a minute's notice?" That is just what I did. But I always compared my watch with the conductor's just as we arrived at the station, and got the exact leaving time from him. Of course I did not let Chic run far out of my sight, and about one minute before leaving time I would whistle to her and, motioning toward the open door of the baggage-car, for it was in June, would command her to jump. Sometimes as she came up on a run she would go sailing in; sometimes, when the ground was a little low, she could not quite make it and then I had to help her. But she got plenty of exercise in that way and made the long trip without inconvenience. The baggagemen all fell in love with her because she made no dirt or trouble. Chic

developed quite a fondness for railroading, and to this day, when around a train, will run to the door of the baggage-car and beg to be let in. From Denver I went to a small town in one of the Western prairie states, which for convenience I will call A—. I had no intention of staying there when I arrived, but was just looking around. Circumstances were such that, after a couple of weeks' prospecting, I concluded to try it anyway. I could at least get some good hunting there, and if I did not like it after a year's trial, I could go somewhere else. So I unpacked my goods, bought some furniture, opened an office, and prepared for business by—loading up one hundred shells! As I have said, it was in June, and there was, of course, not much shooting at that time of the year. The open season on pinnated grouse began September 1, and on quails October 1. There was no close season on ducks, geese, snipes or waterfowl of any description. I had been using nitro powder for some time, but the particular brand which I had been using, and which in all other respects I liked very much, soiled my gun so much that I made up my mind to make a change. I did not know to just which brand of nitro powder I should pin my faith, although I was satisfied of one thing at least, and that was that it should be an American-made nitro, for with all the nitro powders made in this country it seemed to me very strange if not one could be found that would be fully as good, if not better, than any foreign-made article. I had shot all the leading nitros at different times, in a cursory fashion, but had never endeavored systematically to discover which one was the best adapted to my gun, and which was the pleasantest to shoot. In order, if possible, to ascertain these facts, I took four of the leading nitros and made up twenty different loads of each powder with different shot and powder charges, different styles of wadding, but all in the Smokeless shell. I believed the Smokeless shell, with its strong primer, to be the best shell in the market for nitro powder. I loaded five each of

the twenty different loads of each powder and then targeted my shells. I used a twenty-four-inch circle at forty yards and used cardboards, four-ply bristol, set one inch apart, for penetration. After targeting the loads I took the average of each set of five loads as the result of that particular load. I then compared these averages. I found it not at all difficult to arrive at a conclusion, although all of the powders had done exceedingly well. Some of them seemed to give a little better pentration than others, while others again seemed to excel in pattern. After considering pattern, penetration, recoil, report, soiling of gun barrels, difficulty of cleaning gun after using, and probability of pitting barrels, I adopted the American E. C. powder, and I have never had occasion to regret my choice. It is a nice, light, clean powder; requires no particular experience to load, and gives most gratifying results. It is also very regular, each can being the exact counterpart of every other can in both weight and bulk. Many powders give excellent satisfaction when first used, but the very next purchase is liable to prove much stronger, or weaker, than the first, producing an irregularity of pattern and penetration which is very exasperating. Such crude experiments as I was able to make at a neighboring drug store, with the assistance of the druggist, convinced me that the powder was practically chemically pure and that there would therefore be very little danger, with ordinary care, of its pitting the gun barrels. I subjected it to all the crude tests for the effect of moisture and dryness that I could think of, and found it to stand them all with better general results than any of the other powders. I have used this powder ever since with unvarying success and gratification, and am convinced that it is all that the manufacturers claim for it. Of the four best shots in town one still clung to black powder, while the other three each used a different kind of nitro powder. Many a tough argument was had about the merits of our favorite brands of powder, but I was

the only one who had ever conducted any regular experiments with any of the powders and therefore generally had the best of the argument. One day one of the boys dropped into the office and we, as usual, soon began talking about guns, powders, etc. The subject finally turned upon the powder I was using, and he asked me how I loaded it. I told him I was a strong advocate of a judicious combination of hard and soft wads. I had experimented considerably on that subject and believed that the above combination gave better general results than either hard or soft wadding used alone.

"What wadding do you use?" he asked.

"For quail shooting I use two and three-quarters drams of powder and three blackedge or pinkedge wads, with one ounce of number eight shot. These wads give a little more even pattern than the softer wads, and the load is so light there is no recoil anyway. Besides that, the shooting is all done at such close range that the highest degree of penetration is not required. The three blackedge wads are about the cheapest wadding that can be used with any certainty of good results. For prairie chickens early in the season I use the same load as for quails. Later on, however, when the birds are older, warier, flush wilder and fly faster, I use three drams of powder, one cardboard wad, one pinkedge or blackedge, and one U. M. C. white felt."

"What difference does the white felt make?"

"It gives better penetration and lessens the recoil. It is soft and springy and acts like a cushion for a heavy charge. From my experiments I have arrived at the conclusion that the soft wads give the better penetration, the hard wads give the better pattern, and the best general results are obtained from a combination of the two."

"Do you ram this powder very much in loading?"

"No, not this powder. Here is my rammer, or loader. You see it is a brass tube filled with lead and has a

wooden head. Well, I send the wads well home with this rammer and give them a light tap with a mallet to be sure that they are well and horizontally seated. No pounding is necessary."

"How do you load for ducks?"

"For teal ducks I load about the same as for quails, except that I use number seven shot instead of eights or nines. For mallards or canvas-backs exclusively, I should load as heavily as for geese, except that I should use number five or number six shot instead of twos, which I invariably use for geese. For geese I use three and one-half drams of powder, one cardboard, one pinkedge and one white felt wad—all same gauge as the gun—placed evenly in the shell and sent home with a good, hard hand pressure, followed by a very light tap with the mallet. For mixed duck shooting I use three to three and one-quarter drams of powder, wadded as for geese, with one and one-eighth ounces of number six shot. Always use chilled shot with nitro powder. Never use brass shells."

"Why not use brass shells?"

"Because you can't crimp them and, with nitro powders, the crimp is a very important feature. Leave at least a quarter of an inch for the crimp."

"And you still insist that the American E. C. is the best nitro powder in the market to-day, do you?"

"The best American-made nitro. I know nothing about the foreign makes. When we get into the field this Fall I'll let you use some of my shells. When you see how they'll reach out and bring in an old honker at sixty yards or more, you'll be converted, too."

It seemed to me as though the first of September would never come. I was very anxious to get at those prairie chickens that the boys told me were so plentiful thereabout. In the meantime I did not let Chic forget her former teaching. Nearly every evening I took her down to the lake for a run. After exercising her in the field, practicing her with the whistle, quartering, tohoing, retrieving, etc., I would go to the

lake and throw sticks in the water for Chic to bring out. During this period she contracted the eczema. After trying several remedies I wrote to the ever-reliable AMERICAN FIELD and the editor advised a prescription of oil of tar, fishoil, and sulphurous acid, which worked to a charm. The proportions were oil of tar four ounces, fishoil one pint, sulphurous acid two ounces; mix and apply thoroughly every day for one week; then wash it off with a good castile soap. After one week repeat the treatment. It is not very pleasant to use and does not resemble the odor of cologne in the least, but it is efficacious. One evening while Chic was undergoing this treatment I took her out for a little exercise. She was a general favorite in the town, and, as she had been shut up for several days, she was very glad to see her friends again. I tried in vain to keep her away from people, but they would call her, but they did not keep her long! Several of her friends went home that night with fishoil on their hands and garments. A few weeks after this I discovered that she was covered with fleas. A friend of mine recommended creoline, one part to four of water, and I used that. Well, the proverbial dog that has been treated with turpentine cruelly applied by some mischievous small boy could not have excelled Chic in running. I didn't know whether she would ever come back or not. I ran back to the drug store and got the bottle with the creoline and looked at the directions. They read to use one part of creoline to forty of water, instead of four! Perhaps I didn't give that druggist fits! I ran back and lassoed Chic, threw her in a tub of water and went at her with soap and a brush and got most of the stuff off, but her skin was tender for several days. It killed the fleas!

Chic seemed to have a penchant for getting into trouble that Summer. Not long after the flea episode I was petting her one day and discovered a curious kind of insect on my sleeve. I asked one of the boys what that was, and was informed that it was a louse!

Here was more trouble. An inspection showed me that she was covered with them and her hair was also full of nits. Again I resorted to the creoline, but not one part to four. I put a half ounce of creoline in an eight-ounce bottle and filled it up with water. I found that at this strength it was very effective and that there were no unpleasant results. It is not offensive and does not stain, and in this respect is far superior to some other remedies. I can heartily recommend it for destroying noxious insects, or for use in and around the kennel.

CHAPTER XXII

Pinnated Grouse.

About the first of August the boys began to go out after the pinnated grouse, commonly called prairie chickens. My friend Tim, who had come there from San Diego, and I argued in vain in support of the game laws. The season did not open until September 1, and we tried every kind of argument and moral suasion to induce the shooters to wait. On every hand we received the reply: "I won't be the first to go out, but as soon as I hear of anyone else getting 'em, you'll see me out after 'em, too. I don't propose to sit around here and let the other fellows get the cream of the shooting and leave nothing but old, tough birds for me." It must be admitted that there is a great deal of justice in the argument. Nevertheless, Tim and I agreed to wait until the first of September and see if our example would have any effect. I do not know whether it did or not; I know that a great many birds were killed before the season opened and, if I had it to do over again, I am not certain that I would endeavor to make an example of myself to the extent of my own martyrdom. No excuse can be found for a willful lawbreaker, yet it is almost more than can be expected of poor human nature to ask one to sit tamely by and see others reaping the benefit of your own inaction, and laughing at you for your pains. Especially is this true when it is well known that the law can be broken with impunity, for, where all are in the same boat, no one dares inform. But this year Tim and I did not go out until

September 1; I did not hear any of the other hunters say the same thing.

The latter part of August a young friend of mine and I went out late one afternoon. We took no gun with us, but we took Chic along to see how she would work on this new game. It was a beautiful afternoon, but it was bad weather for a dog. It had been hot and dry for a long time and was hot on this particular afternoon. But my friend said he knew where there were some birds, and so we went out to give Chic an introduction to this new scent. She was then about fifteen months old and still a puppy. About two miles out of town we put her out and let her range at will. As we drove leisurely along, talking of the coming sport with chickens, ducks and geese, we suddenly heard a whir of wings and looked around in time to see about twenty prairie chickens, of all sizes, whizzing away in all directions. Right in the center of the place from which they had undoubtedly sprung, stood Chic, the most astonished and eager looking puppy I ever saw. To add to her bewilderment and excitement, a bunch of quails, undoubtedly startled by the flushing of the prairie chickens, went into the air about fifteen yards from her. I jumped out of the buggy and ran over, but I might as well have stayed where I was. I ought to have had my eye on the dog every minute, so I could have told whether she stood the birds at all or not, but of course the flush occurred just at the particular moment when I happened to be looking some other way. From her position and the flight of the birds, it was evident she was very close to them when they flushed, right in the middle of them, as it were. Now, what was to be done in a case of this kind? Should the dog be punished for flushing the birds? I looked at the matter in this way. The ground was very dry and the scent undoubtedly very light and indistinct; it was a hot day and almost entirely without breeze of any kind; the scent was a new one to her and probably altogether

different from the California quails on which she had been trained. More than all else I considered that she was still a puppy, that she was eager and anxious, of a nervous temperament and easily excited. I did not punish her; I did not even upbraid her. I stood quietly by her until the last bird had disappeared and then watched to see what she would do. She had stood with one foot raised, eagerly watching the birds until the last one had gone from view; then she put down her foot, looked up at me with a wag of her tail and exclaimed:

"What were those things? I never saw such big quails before!"

"Never mind, puppy, you'll get better acquainted with them after a while."

Then she started to hunt for the scent, but I had other views. I called her back, made her lie down in the grass, and then I knelt down and stroked her head, tickled her ribs, pinched her tail, and tried to divert her mind from the excitement to which it had just been subjected. At last she seemed to be somewhat cooler and I then called her in to heel and went back to the buggy. This was not at all to her liking, for she was very anxious to resume the hunt and see if there were any more of those big birds there. I made her jump into the buggy and we drove a couple of hundred yards or so down the road and then turned and drove back for a hundred yards or more past the spot where the birds had been, so as to get the benefit of what little breeze there was. The scent was yet fresh, and there might possibly be another bird or two there. I alighted from the buggy and sent her out, but watched her carefully. I walked straight for the spot, while she quartered back and forth like a race horse. At last, as she passed the place where the birds had been, she suddenly wheeled, made a few leaps in that direction and stopped. The pause was but for an instant. She would have gone on, but I had the whistle in my hand, and its shrill command

rung out in a way not to be mistaken, and she came to "toho" at once. She was very reluctant, however, and looked around at me with a vexed expression. She immediately turned her head to the front again, however, and felt the scent with her delicate nose. I walked up behind her and, saying: "Careful, now! Go on!" I sent her ahead. She remembered her training and went cautiously forward with a slow, swinging trot. Her pace grew slower and slower until finally she dropped into a cautious walk, stepped as though treading on eggs and soon froze into a beautiful point. I was close behind her and made no move, but watched her tail. It was rigid as steel for a moment, then began trembling, vibrated, drooped a little, and then wagged, and I knew she had discovered that the bird had taken wing. At the same instant she moved up again, still carefully and cautiously. Most dogs have some habit, or peculiarity, by means of which their masters can tell, if they watch them closely enough, whether they are on game or whether they are "false pointing." I do not think it quite justice to the dog to call a point on fresh scent a false point, but it is so called. By watching Chic carefully I find that if the bird is not there she will only hold her point a few seconds and then her tail begins to droop, and soon to wag, and then on she goes. If the bird is there, then there is neither droop nor motion. She went on again carefully, as before, and made several points and feints without word or comment from me. At last she came to the conclusion that there was nothing there and she dashed in and ran to and fro, thrusting her nose into the tufts of grass from which the birds had so recently risen, in a perfect frenzy of delight and gratification. I watched her attentively and kept pretty close to her. If she had been mistaken and had flushed one or two stragglers she would have had serious cause to regret her bad judgment. A flush at that time, when she had been worked carefully up to the birds, would have

been the signal for condign punishment; but, luckily for her, there were no birds there, and I climbed into the buggy again and drove on.

A little farther on we came to a large field of uncut slough grass, or wild hay. Into this she went and suddenly commenced roading rapidly. Hurrying up the horse we soon caught up with her and I jumped out of the buggy again. Her nose was up high, and she went unerringly forward. She never stopped to point, or even to road slowly or carefully, but roaded rapidly until a prairie chicken burst out within a few feet of her. Here was a serious case. She had undoubtedly scented the bird. She knew enough to point, and she knew from her little training on the hot scent that we had just left that she ought to point as soon as she got the scent. If she had stopped, or paused, or made the faintest indication of pointing, I would have stopped her with a command and then gently worked her up to the game; but she did neither. When the bird flushed she stopped instantly and gazed after him with her big round eyes, and at the same instant the cruel whip came across her back with all the force of my arm. I don't believe in "love licks." I only struck her once, but it was enough to remind her that she had committed a serious fault. To be sure she was young; to be sure she was hunting a new bird and was very anxious. I took these and other excuses into consideration, but I thought, and do yet, that she needed enough punishment to remind her that this bird was to be pointed the same as a California bird, and not flushed. As she felt the whip she sank into the grass with a whine and begged for mercy. I scolded her a little and made her feel thoroughly ashamed, and then let her go on. A half mile further on she suddenly wheeled into as pretty a point as a man need see. Leaping from the buggy I ran up to her. Remembering the whip, she cringed a little as I approached, but I laid my hand on her beautiful head and stroked it gently and reassured her.

I stood there for quite a while, and then walked in ahead of her and flushed the bird. It was an old cock and was alone. Then I praised and petted Chic and made her understand that she had done exactly right. She raced around there like a little demon trying to find more scent, but there was none to find. Calling her in I put her in the buggy and we started for home, and you may be sure that Chic was well petted on the way in. I wanted that last point and its results to be well impressed on her mind, and so I started for home as soon as it had occurred, so that the impression might not be lost, or dissipated by other incidents. I was well enough satisfied with my first trip. I think we are too prone to expect far too much of our young dogs. Indeed I think we are very apt to expect far too much of our dogs, young or old. Dogs are but brutes and are not supposed to have human reason and intellect, yet they are frequently punished by unreasonable and impatient masters because they do things that said masters, with their superior reasoning powers, know to be wrong, but which they have never taught their dogs were wrong. We are also very prone to expect our puppies to go into the field and work as well as old dogs, forgetting the many errors and mistakes that we ourselves made when we were young. Puppies are like children in a great many respects. They need careful watching and training. They have many bad habits which can be corrected and eradicated; they have many which they will outgrow of their own accord; which nature, in its maturity, will eradicate. There are times when severe treatment is necessary, the same as with children, but most times patience and kindness are more efficacious than punishment.

There was a small clump of trees about a mile from town where I was informed there was a small bevy of quails. The birds had been hatched there during the Summer. A few evenings after the occurrence just narrated, I took Chic and walked out that way.

She was hunting merrily right and left when suddenly she whirled into a beautiful point. I had heard the Bob Whites calling in that direction, but had seen nothing. I walked up behind her and took out my watch. I held her on the point for three minutes, and then sent her on, cautioning her, however, so that she would not go too fast. She roaded carefully a few yards and pointed again. This time I held the watch on her again for three minutes, and then walked in and flushed the bird. It was a quail. Chic was petted and praised a little, and sent on again. My object in these lessons was to teach her to be stanch. I wanted her to get over her puppy habits as much as possible and to hold the birds indefinitely if I did not come and flush them myself, or send her in to flush. She was stanch enough but for her eagerness. She must learn to control herself. I worked up three or four quails that evening and held her on all of them without any trouble; in fact, I did not have to speak to her once while she was pointing, until I desired her to go ahead. The next evening this was repeated, and on the second evening the time was extended to five minutes. Still she held the point the full time without being spoken to. The time was thus gradually extended until she would hold a point for fifteen minutes without being cautioned. When I began to hold her for seven and eight minutes she would sometimes show a little uneasiness, but I was close to her and the softly spoken "toho" was sufficient to keep her from even lowering the raised foot. It was beautiful to see her stand thus. You who think that fifteen minutes is not very long, try it sometime with a dog on a point. Take out your watch and hold it while the hands measure out a quarter of an hour. It will seem like two hours to you. And to you who think that fifteen minutes is not a very long time, I also beg to remark that it is a long time for a puppy. Fifteen minutes for a child to stand in a corner is longer to it than twenty-four hours in jail to a full-

grown tramp. I ought to have arisen early those bright Summer mornings and gone out at sunrise, while the heavy dew was on the grass, and given Chic a good training on prairie chickens before the season opened and I was ready to shoot, but I was afraid that some of the boys would think that, after all my preaching, I was out shooting, and so, through this foolish sensitiveness, I lost a good opportunity to educate my dog and caused myself much unnecessary trouble in the field, as will be seen hereafter.

September 1st came in due course of time, as all dates do and will, and Tim and I were among the first to get out. The sun had not yet reddened the eastern horizon with the first blush of dawn when we struck the road. Everyone else had been going north, so we concluded to go south. I had made the acquaintance of a gentleman who lived south of town, and he had told me that there were quite a number of birds on his place, and that I would be welcome to shoot there. So we started for his place. Chic was sitting in the buggy in front of us and her eyes were almost popping out of her head with eager interest and anxiety. It was a beautiful morning, but bade fair to be very warm during the middle of the day. The sun was showing its ruddy face in full over the eastern hills when we drove up to a fence at the end of our journey and tied our horses. We were not quite there yet, but some grouse that had been feeding on a piece of newly plowed ground had flushed at the sound of our buggy wheels, and we marked them down in a little draw and concluded to go after them. We worked up and down that draw, and everywhere we thought it possible for the birds to be, but did not find them. Then we took a wider range, and, while walking up one side of a little cañon—Chic was on the other side with Tim—I suddenly found myself, without any warning, right in the midst of them. Grouse were getting up on all sides of me. The gun cracked right and left and I had the satisfaction of seeing one drop,

and a big bunch of feathers float on the air behind the other one, but it did not come down. At the report of the gun Chic stopped, saw what was going on, and bolted for me. Just as I was felicitating my-

"THAT LITTLE WHIRLWIND PAID NO ATTENTION TO ME."

self on getting my first bird and wishing I had got the other also, something brown and white flashed past me. I was so astonished to see Chic do a thing of that kind that I could not get my breath to call "toho" until she was quite a way from me; then I grabbed my whistle and blew a blast like a Highland

chieftain. But that little whirlwind ahead of me paid no attention to it. She had seen the dead bird fall, or she had seen the live birds fly, and she was bound to get one or the other of them. I believed the puppy was actually out of her senses for the moment, but I thought I could bring them back to her. I knew she would not run far, and, acting on my principle of never calling the dog to me to be punished, I laid my gun down and ran after her as fast as I could go. About forty or fifty yards away she caught scent of the dead bird, wheeled and made straight for it. She had just got it nicely in her mouth and was starting to bring it to me when my hand reached her collar and the whip coiled around her. Again and again it rose and fell until she howled for mercy. Then I ceased, bade her heel, and walked back to the spot where I stood when I shot the bird. I picked up the gun, and while I was saying "Shame on you!" to Chic, another bird got up. At the crack of the gun the bird fell about thirty yards from me and in plain sight. Chic saw it fall but did not offer to stir. In fact, when I moved a little to look down at her, she looked up, and, catching my eye, she dropped her ears and looked as ashamed of herself as a dog well could. Then I bade her sit, and then walked off and retrieved the last bird myself in plain sight of the dog, and she did not move. Perhaps this was rather rubbing it in, but I intended to make this lesson thorough. Having retrieved the last bird and brought it back, I motioned toward the first one—the one that she had once had in her mouth—and said: "Dead bird! Fetch!" and she was away like the wind. She brought the bird beautifully, sat down in front of me and held the bird while I took it from her mouth. But she was still trembling with excitement. I looked at her and thought, from her actions, that she had forgotten her whipping entirely; but she hadn't quite. I then sent her out and she raced away like a field trial winner, suddenly whirled, went up wind about forty yards and pointed.

Tim had come over in the meantime and we walked up to where the dog stood. I told him to shoot when the birds got up and I would watch Chic. But there was no need. With a whir like the sound of a mighty wind in the rushes, about twenty of the grand birds went into the air. Tim made a beautiful double and Chic—well, Chic stood like a veteran of several seasons. With her head high in the air, one foot still raised, ears pricked up and eyes almost starting from their sockets, she was a picture to gladden the heart of an owner, as she stood and watched the flying birds. And I? Well, I saw that Chic was all right, so I cut down a lazy fellow that didn't get in motion quite so soon as his comrades. Then I reached down and stroked Chic's head a little, and said, "Good dog; well done!" and then told her to fetch, which she did most beautifully. We worked along until noon and added considerable to our bag, and also had the satisfaction of seeing Chic do some lovely work, and I thought I would have no more trouble with her.

We took a long nooning, for it was very warm; made our lunch and pipes last as long as possible, and then started out again. And now occurred something which I somewhat hesitate to record. I am not posing, however, as infallible, nor do I even advise others to do as I did with Chic. I am simply telling just what I did, and any who like may do likewise or not, just as they please. The first bunch of birds that we struck after our nooning was found in the long grass. It was hot and dry. Chic was quartering ahead of us and we were walking down wind toward a piece of corn where we hoped to find some birds. Chic was was about sixty yards ahead of us when she ran right into a small bunch of prairie chickens. I did not blame her much for flushing the birds, for, as I have said, it was hot and dry and she was going with the wind. But the sudden flight of the birds all around her, without any warning, seemed to deprive her of her senses, for, to our utter astonishment, she broke

in and chased. I called, and then whistled, in vain. On she went.

"Shoot her! shoot her!" yelled Tim.

A glance was sufficient to show me that she was far enough away so that the shot could do no harm; would no more than sting her, and would not even penetrate the skin. The second glance was along the rib of the gun and told me that I was holding about a foot above her rump and then the gun cracked. She never yelped or whimpered, but the way she doubled her tail under her showed that she was hit, and she simply wheeled and came back to heel on the run, fell in at my side and walked along as though nothing unusual had happened. Now, I have never been able to satisfactorily solve the problem that immediately raised itself. Did she reason, when she chased those birds, that she was so far away from me that I couldn't punish her, or did she simply forget? The fact that she immediately came back to me when she felt the sting of the shot inclines me to believe that she knew that she was doing wrong, and when she found that she was not beyond the reach of punishment she immediately returned. I do not care to defend this shooting of dogs. I have no doubt that many puppies have been rendered gunshy by it. Everyone must do in this matter as his judgment indicates. I would not shoot a dog or a puppy the first or second, no, nor the twentieth time it was out. I would not apply so severe a remedy under any circumstances except as the very last resort. I think it is taking great chances, and I would not recommend it. I can only say that I would study my pupil, and when it was as far advanced as Chic, I think I would know whether such a remedy could be safely applied or not. There will be opinions on both sides of this question. I have heard endless arguments on both sides, but it still remains, in my mind, as the simple proposition that some dogs need it and others do not. Later on, when Chic grew older and more independent, I knew her

on one occasion to deliberately disobey the whistle because, as I believe, she thought she was beyond reach of punishment. I whistled her to come in. She stopped and looked at me. I repeated the whistle and accompanied it with a motion. She could not help but understand, yet she deliberately turned and trotted off. What would you have done? I sent a load of No. 8 shot after her that brought her back in a hurry. I never had to do it but those two times. I hated to do it then, but it seemed to me to be a necessity.

In closing this episode I can only repeat that I do not advise anyone to do as I did. Study the disposition of your pupil and use your own judgment. Immediately when Chic felt the sting of the shot she returned and fell quietly in at my side. We marked the flying birds as well as we could and went after them. I kept Chic into heel until we arrived in the vicinity of where we had marked the birds, and then sent her out. She had gone only a little way when she wheeled, roaded a little, and came to a stand. We walked up, flushed the birds and shot, and Chic did not offer to stir until I sent her in to retrieve. She behaved like an old dog the balance of the afternoon, and we had some very nice sport. As the sun was declining we put up our guns and started for home, and a little after dark we drove into A—, very well satisfied with our day's outing.

CHAPTER XXIII

Morning Shoots.

I now proposed to try and make up for lost time. I could not, of course, go for a long trip every day, but, as I was in the heart of a good grouse country, there was nothing to prevent my rising early two or three times a week and going out after a few birds. I was satisfied with anywhere from three to ten, and did not care to kill a wagon-load. So, one evening on retiring, I set out my rubber boots—for the grass was high where I was going and would be very wet with the heavy dew of Fall—my gun, shooting-coat, shells, etc., and wound up the alarm clock, setting it at 4 o'clock a. m. Chic was an earnest observer of all these preparations and knew very well what it meant. Whether it was from love of the scent, or whether it was to assure herself that she would not be forgotten in the morning, I cannot say, but she left her accustomed corner that night and slept on my shooting-coat. I believe it is customary at such a stage of a story as this to regale the reader with a very exciting dream, at the climax of which the alarm goes off, the dreamer awakes and finds himself in some ridiculous position, and then all goes well. Well, unfortunately I didn't dream. If I did I have forgotten what it was about. When the alarm went off it awoke me and I must confess that I nearly turned over and went to sleep again. The comfortable bed presented attractions at that early hour almost sufficient to outweigh my desire for sport. Perhaps it would have gotten the better of me had it not been for Chic. She knew well what that

alarm was for, and when I stirred in the bed, stretched and yawned, she jumped up and ran over to me and put her cold nose in my face with a whine, exclaiming:

"Oh, do hurry up! It takes you so long to get woke up. It'll be daylight before we get started!"

That settled it, and with a little pat on her head I sprang out and was soon dressed and ready. There was no bother with horses and wagons; I had to wait for no tardy friend; there was no packing away of lunches, or anything of that sort. Chic was to be my only companion, and I was to return by breakfast time; so all I had to do was to open the door and go. The east was just streaked with gray as I stepped outside the door. Terribly lonely shooting, I should think, says someone. Lonely? Who could be lonely when with Nature for a companion? Who that loves shooting cannot find companionship in each twinkling star that seems to wink in jovial sympathy; in the silvery moon that slowly pales before the coming of the Prince of Day; in each slender thread of pink and gold that shoots out from the eastern horizon to proclaim the approaching light? Alone! The village slept; all nature slept; I alone was astir and awake, and I felt my soul thrill with the ecstacy of Monte Christo when he exclaimed: "The world is mine!" Each tree and bush seemed to nod in friendly recognition; the very houses and fences that I passed seemed more cozy and homelike and did not stare at me so coldly as in harsh daylight. Then there was the twitter of an awakening bird, followed by the carol of its mate; then the air was vocal with their glad music. Now a saucy lark flutters down in the road before me and looks at me with inquiring eyes, and the eastern sky is suddenly flooded with a roseate light and day is here. Lonely amid such beauties! Lonely when the day is breaking! Lonely when the short death of night is awaking into a resurrection of beauty! Lonely with all these glories spread out before you as if for your especial delectation! Lonely with the song of Nature in your ears and the

joy of Nature in your heart! Lonely with the pure air of morning filling your lungs and the strength of life and health pulsing through your veins! Oh, no, I was not lonely on those mornings. And then, there was Chic, too. Was she nobody? I have had many a hunt in my lifetime, but none come back to me brighter, purer, more free from discord and discomfort, and more replete with actual pleasure and content than those early mornings afield with Chic and Little Nell. On we went, and in about fifteen minutes we were clear of the sleeping village, crossed the little wooden bridge and came into the great hayfields near the town. A large slough took a crooked and tortuous course through these hayfields, and in many places there were a large number of acres where it had been too wet to cut and the long slough grass was still standing. It had been a very dry year and I believed that in the long grass near the slough would be a good place to find prairie chickens in the early morning. I knew there had been a great many there before the hay was cut, but I also knew that most of them had been shot out before the season opened, and all I expected was the fag end of what had been good shooting. Still I hoped and expected to find enough to work my dog on and give her a little experience with these kings and queens of the prairie.

I worked up one side of the slough clear to the head, about a mile and a half, without getting a shot. Crossing over we started down the other side. I walked leisurely along, while Chic ranged back and forth in front of me, quartering her ground beautifully and seeming to cover every likely spot. I heard a tremendous barking off toward a farmhouse, and looked around to see two large dogs come rushing out as though intending to make breakfast off of me. They were about a quarter of a mile away, however, and stopped a few yards from the house and continued to bark and raise a terrible racket. Why will farmers,

or anybody else for that matter, harbor such useless dogs? Or, if they must have them, why not teach them good manners? Many a runaway, many a broken vehicle, many a broken limb has been caused by some worthless dog rushing unexpectedly at a horse's head, barking with all his might. I do not blame the dog so much; he is only in fun and it is his nature. But I blame the owner; he should have more sense. It is the simplest matter in the world to break a puppy of that wicked habit. Let some friend drive by with a small syringe filled with ammonia and water, about half and half, and when the dog gets close enough give it to him. One dose of this sort, if the dog gets it in the nose, is generally enough. If he is too sharp to get near the buggy, then a good whipping when he gets back from the chase will answer the purpose. Two or three good thrashings is all that is necessary. I read somewhere about a man who had an ill-natured shepherd dog which rushed out and attacked every dog that went by. One day he whipped a fine hunting dog belonging to a couple of gentlemen who were driving by. The next day the same gentlemen drove by and the dog rushed out as usual expecting to make mincemeat of the quiet dog trotting under the buggy, when one of the gentlemen unostentatiously dropped some white object out of the back of the buggy. Before the shepherd could turn and run, which the coward tried to do, the white object, which proved to be a fighting bulldog, had him by the neck and in a few minutes there was the worst whipped shepherd dog in that neighborhood that anyone ever saw. It is unnecessary to say that the lesson was sufficient, for ever after the shepherd dog shunned as a thing unclean every buggy that drove by the place. My attention was attracted for a few moments by the baying of the dogs mentioned, and when I looked around Chic was roading cautiously. Her head was high in the air and she was stepping slowly forward, every action denoting that she was near game. My whistle was in

my hand in an instant and I whistled toho. She stopped and then immediately began to go onward again. Again I whistled, and again she stopped for a moment and then went on. She was determined to get as close as possible to those birds. I saw that she was going to road to a flush and hastened to get to her. I reached her side just as the bird rose and at almost the same instant I grasped her collar and plied the whip. Birds were getting up all around me, but I paid no attention to them; Chic was occupying all my time and both hands at that moment. When I got through the birds were all gone. I sent her on and she went away as merrily as though nothing had happened. She never sulked; no matter what she did and no matter how hard a whipping she got, the matter ended there. Not more than eighty yards further on, as she was coming across wind, she suddenly wheeled, roaded a little way, and then pointed. I walked up and took out my watch. Five minutes passed and she had not offered to move. Ten minutes I waited and then put up my watch and clucked to her to move on. She turned her head slightly when I clucked to her and I motioned and clucked again. Then she went slowly and cautiously forward; not more than six inches at each step, and as carefully as a cat moving toward its prey. For about ten yards she moved in this manner and then pointed again. I clucked to her again but she did not want to move, and I knew she was close to the birds. I walked in and flushed, the birds getting up about five yards ahead of her. It was as pretty a piece of work as I ever saw. Did the whipping do any good? You must answer that question for yourself; I can only give the facts and repeat what I have so often said before—study the disposition of your dog. Some dogs can be raised and trained almost to perfection without the use of the whip even once, almost without ever a cross word. Other dogs must have the whip occasionally. Chic is one of the latter kind. I think it is due to her unusual intelli-

gence. I believe that she reasons that I think so much of her that I will not hurt her very much. She always appears surprised when she is whipped. Again she is like many of her sex, very stubborn and bent upon having her own way. She knew as well, or better than I, how those prairie chickens ought to be approached, yet she deliberately roaded to a flush. I am certain she knew better. If I had not been certain of it I would not have whipped her. Chic has flushed many times when the wind has been against her, sometimes when the ground was hot and dry, and a few times when she was not in condition. She was never punished for those mistakes. But when she deliberately did what she did that morning it is my belief that she deserved punishment and I point to the sequel in support of my belief. I made a nice double when the birds arose. They were young ones, nearly full grown. Chic and I both watched them as they sailed away and marked them down, well scattered, near the fence that bordered the railroad. When they had settled and the gun was reloaded, I told Chic to fetch. She sprang in to retrieve but suddenly stiffened to a point again. "Aha," thought I, "a straggler; I'll fix him!" I walked up with all the assurance in the world and an old cock got out almost under my feet and went off with a great cackle. I laughed as he went away, amused at his braggadocio and at his futile efforts to escape. I covered him nicely and waited for him to get far enough away so that he wouldn't be blown to pieces and then pulled the trigger. Did he come down all in a heap? Well, I guess not! For all I know to the contrary he's going yet! I just missed him slick and clean with both barrels. How is it that a fellow will make remarkably good shots, one after another, and then miss some very easy ones? We followed the birds over toward where we had marked them down and Chic commenced to work with a will. It was only a few minutes before she had one of them. I did not repeat my error of a few minutes before, but knocked

it down nicely as it went away, quartering to my right. Thirty or forty yards further on another point was had and another bird added to the bag. Prairie chickens are easy to shoot under such circumstances, and it is no great credit to make a big bag. I now had four birds; it was all I cared for; the sun was getting high, and so we turned our steps homeward. On the way in another single was picked up, and at half past 8 o'clock I was in my office ready for business, Chic was sleeping in her accustomed corner, little Nell was nicely cleaned up and stowed away, and the only indication of the recent carnage was a feather that I found sticking on the end of Chic's nose about half an hour later.

A few days after this little shoot I went out again. As before it was very early morning when we started, and before the sun had shown his ruddy face in the east we were on the same ground as before. The air was vocal with the merry trill of the upland plovers and they were flying over and around me all the time. There is nothing more beautiful than the soft, mellow, liquid music of their call. Sometimes away above you, so high that they look no larger than a lark; sometimes to the right or left, but always out of range, their notes come like pearls of melody dropping from the azure sky. I never saw so many at one time as I saw this morning. They were everywhere, and a few ventured too near me and were soon in my shooting-coat pocket. Now I thought I would try an experiment. As I have stated, this took place in a large hayfield through which ran a large slough or marsh with long, uncut grass. The hay was put up in cocks around the field. I took my half-dozen or so of plovers and set them up in as lifelike positions as possible near one of the haycocks; then I dug out the top of the haycock and climbed into it with Chic. Poor Chic didn't like that at all, for she couldn't see out of the top and did not know what was going on. When I stood erect my head and shoulders only were above

the hay, and by stooping I could hide myself entirely. The plovers were flying all around me and I had no need to try and call them, yet nevertheless I did. I practiced their cry until I got a fairly good imitation and then called to one that was coming and flying very high. To my surprise and delight it pitched down almost like a jacksnipe and was about to alight among the decoys when a report from little Nell laid him low. I now kept snugly hid and did not call very much, for there was no need. The plovers had forgotten seeing me climb into the haycock and they saw their friends down there and came sailing fearlessly over me, or made preparations to alight. I bagged a dozen of them in a very short time and would have had more but I had only brought a few shells, and they were loaded with sevens, and I did not care to put in the morning without giving Chic her share of the sport. So I climbed out of my blind, to the great consternation of fifty or more plovers, gathered up the slain and proceeded on my way, promising myself a good time with the songsters on some other morning. By the way, I don't remember ever eating anything much nicer than those same upland plovers; they were delicious. Then they are very wary and hard to get at, too, which makes their meat all the more appreciated by the sportsman. We had not gone far when Chic commenced to make game. She threw up her head and trotted slowly up wind. Slower and slower she went until she was proceeding in a careful, cautious walk. I thought of stopping her and then I thought that by this time she ought to know enough to stop herself. I followed close behind her and she showed every indication of being near the game, but still she made no point. I thought that perhaps the birds were running, but prairie chickens seldom do this. As she crept closer and closer I came to the conclusion that she was inviting more trouble for herself, and so the sequel showed. On she went like a cat creeping after a mouse until at last, after a moment's hesitation, she

made a spring and a nearly full-grown bird sprang into the air almost under her nose. She nearly caught it, and a moment later she was "catching it" in very truth. The gun had been laid down and as the bird flushed the whip descended on poor Chic's back. We were right in the midst of a big covey and birds were getting up on all sides, but Chic and I were both busy and the birds went away unharmed. I was almost in despair, for it began to seem as though I had to whip her every morning before she would attend to business. I did the job thoroughly and then we proceeded on our way. In a short time she got scent again, roaded as before, and then came to stanch point. I walked up and stood admiring her for a few minutes and then walked in ahead. No bird appeared. I looked around and she was still pointing. I walked on fully thirty feet and still flushed no bird. Chic was still pointing. I motioned her to come and she approached me very carefully, step by step, and when within about six feet of me stood again. She was trembling in every limb and I knew the birds must be there. I urged her to go on, but she would not move. Of course I did not urge her very much, for I did not want her to go ahead and flush, but only spoke to her once or twice in order to test her. Again I walked on, and when I was about twenty feet more in front of her there was a whir of wings in front of me and to my right, and half a dozen or more birds made the air musical with their swiftly beating pinions. I scored with the first barrel but missed with the second. I looked around at Chic. She still stood where I had left her; but the point was broken and she was watching the flying birds with her whole soul looking out of her intelligent eyes. No prettier work could be asked of a dog. At the command she rushed in and retrieved beautifully. I could not help petting her and praising her for such a nice piece of work, but asked her reproachfully why she did not do that at first.

"I forget," she replied. "When we first go out I am so excited and so anxious to get the birds that I do not realize how very close I am getting to them. It is all right for you to remind me with that whip, but there is no need for you to whip me so hard."

I accepted the reproof and stroked her head a few moments before we started after the birds we had marked down. We picked up three singles and then crossed the railroad track and started across the fields toward the river. The conditions here were the same as in the fields we had just left. I was trudging on through wet grass more than knee high, and Chic was ranging off to my right. In investigating some likely looking spot she had got considerably in my rear and I looked around and, catching her eye, motioned her in toward me. She came like a racehorse; came up behind me and rushed on ahead. She had only got about thirty feet ahead of me when she wheeled to the right as sharply as though she had suddenly run against some impenetrable obstacle, threw her head high and commenced roading. The grass was so high that she could not see over it, and I followed her closely. She was a beautiful sight as she roaded through that high grass. The sun was up and the morning was extremely lovely. The heavy dew glistened on the long grass like diamonds. Chic moved more and more slowly, lifted her feet high to avoid tangling them in the grass, suddenly quivered from head to foot, crouched very slightly, and then I could see her stiffen in each muscle and fiber. Immovable as a rock, a "living picture" in very truth, and the most beautiful one that it was ever the lot of mortal man to behold. Then I wished for a kodak. Not that I might preserve the picture for myself, for, like many others, it is forever imprinted on my memory's lens and is ever present with me, but that I might show it to my friends. Having surfeited myself with the inspiring view I moved on in front of her. As before I went until I began to think that possibly she was mistaken, for I

saw no birds. Again I turned and motioned her up to me. She came slowly and carefully and, right at my side, stiffened into a point again. There could be no mistaking that, and, stopping to stroke her lovely head, I moved on ahead of her again. At a distance of fully

"THREW HER HEAD UP AND COMMENCED ROADING."

thirty yards from where she had first pointed the birds flushed. I scored with each barrel, hastily opened the gun, threw in a couple more shells and cut down a laggard. That is one of the beauties of an ejector gun. There is no trouble taking out the shell; no shells sticking in the gun, and it saves a very appreciable amount of time when in a "hot corner" with prairie chickens or ducks. The birds flew on over a piece of meadow that had been cut and settled in a small slough or swale about a hundred yards distant. They were well

scattered, all young birds, and I anticipated some fine sport with them. Nor was I disappointed. We moved up to them and Chic almost immediately pointed. I flushed and killed, and one after another we routed them out of their hiding places. Some got away, others found their last resting place in my coat pocket. Chic behaved like a veteran. She did not flush nor in any way do anything that was not exactly to my liking, and I am rather particular, too.

There is no use of going into detail with the many other of those delightful morning trips. Time after time Chic and I hunted those bottoms together; sometimes only two or three birds rewarded us; sometimes ten or a dozen. I took my little darling's reproach to heart, and thereafter when she made a mistake through her eagerness, instead of giving her a hard whipping I only gave her one cut, or perhaps only pinched her ear just enough to remind her that that would not do. She gradually outgrew that fault and became as steady and stanch as one could wish. But for some time I had to watch her at first lest she would be too eager. I never had any trouble of that kind with her on quails. She seemed to be a natural quail dog. Whether it is because her ancestors for many generations have hunted quails and have not had the opportunity to become educated on prairie chickens, I do not know. This, however, may have had something to do with it. It may be that the scent of the prairie chicken, being so much stronger than that of a quail, excited her unnaturally; it may be that the size of the birds contributed to her excitement. However, I know she was very eager and very anxious, and, in her young days, which I have just been describing, I had considerable trouble with her, as we have seen. Now, however, I am content to go out with Chic and hunt with anybody's dog, satisfied that at the end of the day Chic and I will have nothing to be ashamed of.

CHAPTER XXIV

In the Field.

One morning in the fore part of October, before the sun had deigned to show his genial face, my friend Will and I might have been seen driving out of A—, toward the hills south of town. Will was a most enthusiastic sportsman, but, as yet, a little new at the recreation. He had just invested in an L. C. Smith gun, together with a shooting coat, hat, gun case, cleaning tools and all the rest of the paraphernalia necessary in a sportsman's outfit. Chic was sitting at our feet with eyes wide open taking in everything of interest along the route. Not a meadowlark or gopher escaped her attention and she was more than anxious to get out and get to work.

"Why don't you let her run?" asked Will.

"Because I want her fresh and her nose cool when we get into the field," I answered.

"Do you let her ride back, too?"

"No, I let her run back."

"Why do you do that? I should think that would be just the time you would want her to ride."

"No, I figure this way: I let her ride out so as to have her fresh and eager when we get into the field; then, after she has worked all day and is hot, if I should put her into the buggy and let her ride home, she would get stiff and rheumatic. Sitting in the buggy there is always more or less of a breeze, or draft, and she would catch cold. She is never too tired to run home, as you will see at the end of the day. She not only runs back but she will hunt every likely field

and cover on the way back. Then when we get home I give her a good rubbing down; if she is muddy I clean off the worst of it, and she has a good night's rest and feels all right the next morning. Take our own cases, for instance. After we have hunted and got thoroughly heated up, if we then sit down in a draft without anything additional around us, we feel stiff and lame, and catch cold; if we would keep up the exercise until we get home and then take a good bath, we would not take any cold or suffer any evil results. I think it is the same way with a dog. You would think a man was a fool who would drive a valuable horse until he was thoroughly heated and would then tie him to a post where the cold wind could blow on him. Same with a dog. You let her run all day, get heated through and through, and then put her in a buggy and drive home with her, what are you to expect? That she will get stiffened up, of course. But let her run all the way home, go right into the house out of the wind, get a good rub and then a good hearty supper, and your dog is all right for another day's work. Besides that, I never saw Chic so tired that she wanted to ride."

"What did you mean when you spoke about this gun fitting me when I was talking about buying it?"

"A gun should fit a man as well as the clothes he wears. Men are not all the same size, therefore the gun that one man can shoot will not be a convenient size for another man. A gun should have a length of stock just so that when it is brought to the shoulder it will come up nicely. If too long it will catch under the arm, unless you shove it away out when bringing it up, which is a very awkward motion. If too short you have to bring it back against the shoulder after bringing it up. This is not only a waste of time, which is often valuable, but disconcerts you and is liable to spoil your aim. It also keeps your mind on the gun when it should be on the game, estimating its distance and flight. Then the gun should have just enough drop

of stock so that when you bring it to your shoulder, drop your head so that the cheek just touches the comb of the stock, the eye will be in a position to naturally follow the rib of the gun to the sight. A man with a long neck requires a stock with more drop than a man with a short neck; a man with long arms, of course, requires a longer stock than a man with short arms. Give a short-necked man a gun with too much drop and, unless he is posted and is very careful, he will sight from one corner of the rib at the breech to the sight. This is a very slight difference, but at forty yards it makes a difference of about three feet. Try it yourself. Sight at some object from one side of the rib to the sight; then, without moving the gun, move the head just enough to sight exactly along the center of the rib and you will see what a difference it will make. I shot a gun with too much drop for me for quite a while before I discovered the reason for my unaccountable misses. The gun should be the right weight for you, too, and should balance right. All these things are considered when we speak of the fit of a gun."

"Why did you recommend me to buy a 12-gauge gun instead of a 10-gauge?"

"Well," said I, with a short laugh, "now you are asking a question on which there are as many opinions as there are shooters. If you had been a large, powerfully-built, strong man, I might have recommended a 10-gauge. As I said, a man should have a gun to fit him in weight as well as in measurement. A 10-gauge gun, with its heavier load, may possibly reach and kill game a few yards farther than a 12-gauge. I do not admit that it will; I only admit the possibility. But very long shots are very rare. Most of the game that you and I will kill will be within forty yards; almost all of it within fifty yards, and very rarely a shot at a longer distance than sixty yards. At any of these distances a 12-gauge gun, in my opinion, is just as effective as a 10-gauge, and if the game was any

farther off, probably neither of us could hit it anyway, no matter how far our guns would shoot. Then there is a difference in the time required to bring a light gun into position and that required for a heavy one. Let one of us carry a ten or twelve pound gun around these fields on a hot day and we would soon get tired and want to sit down. There again a good deal of time would be wasted when, with lighter guns, we would be at work. The chief reason, however, in my mind, is this: Men like you and I hunt for pleasure. We have a good time out in the field if we only get a few birds. The greater part of our pleasure is in getting out of town; getting out into the fields away from the noise and dust, the drudge and grind of the city. Why, then, should we do anything to detract from our pleasure and make it seem more like work? I do not think I lose a dozen birds in a year with my 12-gauge that I could have bagged with a 10-gauge. Now if I knew positively that I lost ten times that many I would still cling to the 12-gauge gun, on account of the greater pleasure of carrying and handling it, and the less work there is in it. To sum it all up, I do not use a 10-gauge on account of the greater labor of handling it. It is the same way with shells. I have seen fellows load up all their pockets with shells, adding from twelve to twenty pounds to the weight they had to carry, and then go trudging around a slough after jacksnipes, sinking up to their ankles at every step, with the buggy tied to a fence not thirty yards away. I prefer to leave a few loads in the buggy and go after them a little oftener."

"You're a lazy fellow," said Will.

"Well, that's all right. You will never see me lag in the field. I always have plenty of shells, too, and never ran out of them yet that I remember of, but I believe in using a little judgment and common sense about these things. As long as we are hunting for fun let's get all the fun and as little work out of it as we can."

We had reached our destination and the sun

was just peeping over the hills. We jumped out, found a shady place for our horse, unhitched him from the buggy and tied him to a tree, threw a little bunch of hay down in front of him, took our guns out and put them together, put fifteen or twenty shells in our pockets, motioned to Chic—who had all this time remained in the buggy and eagerly watched every movement—and started for a stubble-field which lay right by the side of a large cornfield. We walked leisurely along, talking as we went, and keeping good watch of the dog.

"Here! Don't point that gun at me!" I exclaimed, as I looked toward Will and found myself staring down the muzzle of his 12-gauge.

"It ain't loaded," said he, with a laugh.

"I don't care whether it's loaded or not. More men have been killed with guns that were supposed not to be loaded than with guns that were known to be. You can't be too careful with your gun. Never let the muzzle of a gun swing in the direction of anybody."

He was carrying his gun on his right arm; his right hand grasped the stock of the gun just below the trigger guard, the barrels resting in the hollow of his right arm. As I was walking on his right the inclination of the gun brought the barrels in such a position as to be pointing right at me. He changed the position of the weapon and we walked on.

"You ought to load your gun," said I. "Suppose a bird should get up in front of you, you wouldn't be ready."

"Why, I supposed Chic would point all the birds!"

"Chic will find a good many, if there are any here, but she can't be everywhere at the same time. We are liable to 'walk up' a bird at any time, so you had better load up."

After he had slipped in a couple of shells, I said: "Now carry your gun this way." Suiting the action to the word I threw my gun over my right shoulder, trigger guard up, with the breech of the barrels resting on my shoulder; the right hand grasping the stock

of the gun at the pistol grip, with the thumb on the safety. I always carry my gun at safe when hunting with a companion. When the game springs into the air the same motion that brings the gun to the shoulder releases the safety, and there is no time lost. When hunting alone I am not always so particular. "Now," said I, "suppose a bird should jump up here unexpectedly, see how quickly I could throw the gun down, bring up my left hand and take aim." Acting as I spoke, my left hand came up simultaneously with the movement of the right hand bringing the gun down, and the gun dropped into my left hand exactly on a level with my eye, the stock was brought against my shoulder and the gun was ready for action. It is all one motion, or rather the motions of the right and left hands and the head are simultaneously made and occupy the time of only one motion. "It is a good thing for you to practice that a little until you get the habit acquired. It is all a habit, and after a while you will get so that you can bring the gun from that position and take aim as quickly as you can bring it up when holding it in front of you and ready for the game. If your shoulder gets tired, as it will sometimes, then carry your gun with the butt under the right shoulder, the right forearm thrown across the body and the gun resting upon it. The trigger guard keeps the gun from slipping down." As I spoke I showed him how it was done. "This is not a good position, however," I continued, "for it is hard to get the gun in shape for instant use when you have it in this position. I only use it once in a while when I am in a place where I am very certain there is no game, and when I am a little tired or cramped in other positions."

Just then Chic began to road. Calling Will's attention to it, we quickened our steps and were soon close behind her. Looking around I saw that Will still had his gun on his shoulder.

"Now take your gun this way," said I. "Hold your

right hand at the waist, grasping the stock of the gun, with the thumb on the safety, the left hand grasping the fore-end of the gun in a natural position. As the bird springs into the air and as you bring the gun to your shoulder, slip the safety up. You lose no time by it and you are always safe from accidental discharges. After a while, when you are more accustomed to handle the gun, you can leave the safety off if you wish. That's one thing I like about the Smith gun. By drawing the safety clear back it is always cocked and ready. I rarely use mine that way, however, except when I am alone in a blind and the birds are coming thick and fast. It is better to learn the way I tell you, though, and you can easily change afterward if you want to."

Here Chic pointed.

"Now," said I, "if a bird gets up in front of you, let him have it; don't wait for me to shoot. I may aim at him, but I will not shoot until after you do."

Almost as I spoke a bird flushed right in front of Will. His gun came up like a flash, cracked, and, to my astonishment, the bird fell dead. I had no time to make any remark other than to cry: "Good!" for the birds were now rising in all directions. I scored with each barrel, threw open the gun, the shells being thereby thrown out by the ejector mechanism, hastily inserted a couple more shells and was in time to stop the flight of an old cock that was going off cackling at a great rate. As the last shot died away Will burst into a run.

"Hold on here! Where are you going?" I yelled.

"Going after that bird I shot," he replied, trembling with excitement. It was his first chicken and I sympathized with him.

"Just wait a minute," said I. "I want to show you something. Is your gun loaded?"

"No—I—why, I don't know whether it is or not." With that he opened the gun and showed up two shells which had both been fired.

"Now, old man," said I, "breaking shot is almost as bad a habit in a man as in a dog. It is easier cured, however. Suppose you had run after that bird without any loads in your gun, and had flushed a straggler; or worse yet had run across a rattlesnake in a position demanding quick action. Either supposition is bad enough, isn't it? Well, just remember that the bird is not going to get away very far while you are putting in a couple of shells, and remember that it is very bad practice to be in the midst of your work with your tools out of order. Always load your gun before you start to retrieve your bird. In this case you don't have to retrieve, for here is your bird," and I motioned toward Chic who came trotting up proudly, bringing in the dead bird. While talking with Will I had motioned to her and she had gone off like a shot and found the bird.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Will, stooping to take the bird from Chic's mouth, "that's pretty fine."

"Fetch the others," said I, with a wave of the hand, and in a few minutes the rest of the birds were in my pockets, and we were going after some of those which had escaped and which we had marked down.

"By the way," said Will, "why didn't you shoot at that last bird that got up and went away to the left?"

"Well," replied I, "in the first place it wasn't my bird; it was yours."

"Mine!" exclaimed he. "How do you make that out? I claim no proprietorship in any of them!"

"No, of course not; but that's part of the etiquette of the field. You are on my left. If a bird gets up in front of you and goes away to the left, it's your bird. I have no right to shoot at it unless you shoot and miss; then I can try it if it is not too far away. If a bird goes to the right, it is my bird; that is, it is my right to shoot first at it. When a bird rises exactly in front of both of us and goes straight away, as sometimes happens, then it is 'first come, first served,' and the fellow who is quickest with his gun is entitled to

the meat. In our case, however, I should let you have the first shot."

"Why?"

"Because you are learning. A gentleman in the field will always give his less experienced companion the preference, and will give him the best positions and the easiest shots. A game-hog will probably say, 'Oh, you couldn't hit it anyway, so I thought if I didn't shoot it it would get away,' and then slyly laugh at you. There is no place where a gentleman's natural gentility is so quickly displayed, and where a hog's bristles are so quickly uncovered, as in the field. If I go to your house to dinner you don't help yourself first and then pass the food to me. Well, the principle is the same here. You are my guest, and it is a pleasure to me to assist you to what little I know about the sport. Until you get so you can hold your own, which you will do very quickly if that first shot of yours is any criterion, you will always get the cream of the shooting when with me."

"Thank you very much," replied Will. "I didn't know there was so much to it as all that."

"There is so much to it that a nice little book could easily be written on the subject of field etiquette. Wait until you go out with someone who happens to be a little quicker with the gun than you are, and have him snap all the shots away from you, put you in positions where you will have no chance to do anything, and then laugh at you; then you will understand it."

"Where do these prairie chickens go during the heat of the day?" asked Will.

"Into the corn. Let me put you onto something there. When you are working out a cornfield always walk along the north side of the field. That's where you are most apt to find chickens. They go into the corn to escape the heat; it is cooler on the north side of the field than on any other; ergo, look for the birds on the north side of the field. In the early morning you will find them out in the stubble. A good wheat stubble

with plenty of ragweed growing in it, and a cornfield on one or more sides of it, is the best. If it has corn all around it, that is still better. There you will also find them in the evening after it grows cool. In this country you can also find them, and the sharp-tailed grouse, especially the latter, in the wild grass in the mornings and evenings. The prairie chicken is a grouse and the sharp-tailed grouse are first cousins to the pinnated grouse, or prairie chickens, and are fully as good eating and furnish as good sport in hunting. They are not quite as large as the pinnated grouse, however."

By this time we had arrived in the neighborhood of the place where I had marked down some of the birds from the last covey. Chic was working industriously and in such a manner as convinced me that she had also marked the birds. She went straight to very nearly where they were, quartered once or twice, roaded, and drew steadily and slowly down to a beautiful point. We were soon up to her, and walked in and flushed the bird, which got up in front of Will and sailed away to the left.

"Shoot! shoot!" I yelled, but no report came from his gun. Waiting until I was forced to conclude that he was not going to shoot, I sent a load of eights after the fleeing bird, but got only feathers for my pains.

Chic looked up at Will and growled out: "Why didn't you shoot?"

"I don't know what is the matter," said Will, handing his gun to me, "my gun wouldn't go off."

I didn't take the proffered gun, but merely pointed to the safety, through the little slot of which the word "safe" peered mischievously. Will turned the color of the "red, red rose," and muttered something that wouldn't look well in print.

"Never mind," said I. "That happens to all of us sometimes."

As we drew near the wagon at noon, ready for lunch and the good ice-cold coffee which was put up in two

beer bottles and packed in a pail between two pieces of ice, and which tastes better than anything that can be imagined when out on a trip like that, Will suddenly raised his gun and fired at a meadowlark that flew up before us. Unluckily he hit it.

"Oh, don't do that!" I exclaimed, but too late.

"Why not?" asked he.

"For several reasons. In the first place, what is the good of wantonly taking the life that God has given and which we cannot replace? The bird is fit for food, it is true, but so small that you wouldn't think of taking it home. Its little life has been wasted, then, to afford you an instant's satisfaction. They are so pretty, too, and fill the air with their music. It's wrong to destroy any of the beautiful song birds wantonly and without purpose. When we came out this morning don't you remember how you remarked on the pleasure of hearing the first lark that sang for us? Didn't it add to the pleasure of the trip? Secondly, many farmers and farmers' wives and daughters are very fond of the few song birds that we have here, and strongly object to having them killed. I have had many of them say to me that they wouldn't care if fellows would come on their land and shoot what game they wanted, but, they say, these fellows come out from town and shoot everything they come across, without any distinction or discrimination, and they don't like it. It keeps up a continual fusilade around their homes and destroys the harmless and beautiful song birds which help to gladden their oft-times dreary labor. Thirdly—"

"Hold on," cried Will, throwing up his hands, "that's enough."

"Yes," I said, "I know that's enough. At least it ought to be. You are not cruel by nature; just a little thoughtless, that's all. Now that it has been mentioned to you, sentiments of humanity will prevent a repetition of the act. But there is still another reason which, from a selfish standpoint, is more important still. Chic

saw that bird fly, saw you aim at it, and saw the bird fall when you shot. What more natural than that she should come to the conclusion that you wanted those birds and she should begin to point meadowlarks? Meadowlarks have a scent a great deal like a prairie chicken or quail anyway, and it is not infrequently the case that old dogs are fooled by them. I never shoot anything when out with Chic that I do not want her to think is game. I have never even shot a rabbit when out with her. I don't want her to get to pointing rabbits, and therefore I haven't shot any. By not pointing them, I mean I don't want her to hunt for them, track them, road them, etc. Of course, if she suddenly comes on the scent of a rabbit she will wheel into a point, and I do not chide her for it; it is game and it is natural for her to point it. But she never pays any further attention to them. But if I should begin shooting rabbits over her, have her retrieve them, and all that sort of thing, she would soon learn to hunt for them as assiduously as she now does for chickens or quails."

"I see what you mean, and I won't shoot any more meadowlarks," said Will.

After lunch was over we enjoyed a pipe apiece and then I took the birds out of my pockets and laid them out in front of me.

"What are you going to do?" asked Will.

"Draw these birds," said I. "This is a pretty warm day for this time of the year, and when it is as warm as this, the quicker the birds are drawn the better they are. Every hunter should learn to take care of his game. It frequently saves it from spoiling."

It was the work of only a few moments to draw the birds, pull some of the dead grass and stuff it inside of them, put them in the buggy with the few little pieces of ice we had left, and cover the whole with a blanket. We rested a little while longer and then went to work again.

When we started for home we drove a little out of

our way to go through some little valleys—called cañons by the natives—which were full of quails. Arriving at one of the more promising ones, we jumped out, tied our horse, and started up the cañon. We walked along a path that ran up the center of the little valley—for that is what it was, as it had no more resemblance to a cañon than it had to a mountain—while Chic worked along through the brush that lined one side. Soon I heard a rustling and chirping, and, stooping down, I looked underneath the branches of the brush and saw a covey of quails running in front of the dog. Poor Chic did not know what to do. The quails would run a little way and then stop and look around with inquiring eyes. Chic would move carefully up to within scenting distance, and by the time she got nicely settled into a point the quails were on the run again. I told Will what was going on, and then telling him to be ready and be on the lookout, I tossed a stick into the brush where the birds were. Out they went with a roar, and to our four barrels but one bird fell. Will said he aimed at that one and so I said I guessed he got it, and it went into his sack. But the birds did not fly far before they settled in some long grass just at the bottom, and on the other side of a sloping hill. We followed them, and had some very nice shooting on singles and doubles. I found that they were of a different color from the California birds, and, being a lighter color, were an easier mark. They laid better for the dog, did not flush so wild, and did not fly as fast when flushed. Nor did they require near as much killing. On the whole, while not what would be called an easy bird to kill, yet they are much easier than their California cousins. Following on up the cañon we soon had another covey up, and also had some nice shooting from that.

It was getting late and darkness bade fair to overtake us before we got home, so we turned back and proceeded on our return journey. We had had a day full of sport and pleasure, and one that left no regrets to

mar its recollections, except that Will remarked once that he wished he hadn't killed that meadowlark. Arriving home Chic was well rubbed with a flannel cloth—an operation which she heartily enjoyed—and given a good supper of table scraps with a generous sprinkling of meat, after which she demurely walked over to her corner and dropped onto her bed with a tired yawn of satisfaction, licked her chops a few times, looked at me, and remarked that she hoped we would go again soon, and then dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER XXV

A Day with the Ducks.

"Well, Will, have you tried your hand at the ducks yet?" I asked my friend of the former chapter, one nice morning.

"Not yet," he replied, "but I am ready to go at any time."

"Well, things are rather quiet now, so what do you say to this afternoon?"

"All right; I'm agreeable. What time shall we start?"

"Just as soon as we can. Get an early dinner and we'll try and be off at half past twelve."

"All right; I'll be ready."

A few minutes later my friend's clerk came to my office and said Will wanted me to come and go to dinner with him; to bring Chic and the gun with me and we would start from his house. He had already ordered a two-seated conveyance to report at his house at 12:30 o'clock. I wondered what that two-seated conveyance was for, and when I got to the house I discovered that Mrs. J— was going with us. In the meantime it had clouded up and looked like rain. After a delicious dinner, such as only Mrs. J—, Will's wife, can cook, we found that a slight drizzle which bade fair to increase and last all the afternoon, had already set in. I tried to dissuade the lady from going, but it was of no use. She said we needed someone to hold the horse and she was going anyway. I admired her grit and thought she was a jewel of a wife for a sportsman to have. The rig was a large two-seated carriage; did not look much like a hunting outfit, but proved to be a

first-class affair for a rainy day. We started promptly at the time agreed upon and drove up the canal. The lake which I have mentioned before was an artificial one, formed by the waters of the river flowing down through a canal for about eleven miles into a natural basin, the outlet of which had been closed by a large dam. At the head of the canal was a large tract of marshy ground. The water was clear and sweet, being the product of springs mingled with the overflow from the river. Wild rice, celery, smartweed and watercresses grew there in profusion, and it was a favorite haunt for mallards, canvas-backs, redheads and pintails.

As we drove along up the canal we whiled away the time with hunting stories and jokes, and Mrs. J— rapidly developed a true sportsman's enthusiasm and began to talk about buying a gun for herself, which idea I did not discourage. How much better it would be for many of our housed-up women if they would take an occasional trip with their husbands or brothers, with a dog and gun, and drink in health and life from Nature's fountain! How much pleasanter, and how much sweeter the recollections from an afternoon with the birds, than the recollections of an afternoon spent at some neighbor's discoursing on the failings of other women, or an afternoon spent in that abomination of women—fashionable calls! Chic was racing along through the fields and covering every possible hiding place for birds. Now I think I hear someone ask:

"I thought you always let Chic ride out and run back. How does it happen that she is running out this time?"

The explanation is very simple. It was cool weather; we were not going to have enough work to get her heated and tired anyway, and so, as she would rather run, I let her do so. If it had been warm weather and she had a hard day's work before her, she would have had a place in the carriage on the way out. Suddenly Mrs. J— exclaimed:

"Look at Chic! What's the matter with her? Has she got cramps?"

Sure enough, Chic looked as though she had a cramp.

"LOOK AT CHIC! HAS SHE GOT CRAMPS?"

She had been running across wind and suddenly got a hot scent at her right. She had stopped with her head at a right angle with her body, her body curved and the weight on the front feet, while one hindfoot was poised

in the air as though frozen. She was not in a graceful position, but it was a point to make a sportsman's heart bound. For answer I tossed the lines to Mrs. J— and leaped out of the carriage. Will's gun was still in the case and he did not get out. I walked up and Chic's point proved to be on a bevy of quails, and I made a nice double on them when they rose. I walked back to the carriage and found Mrs. J— in a fever of excitement.

"Oh, I never saw a dog on a point before! Do they always twist themselves up that way when they point? How did she know the birds were there? Did she see them? Smell them! Nonsense! She couldn't smell them as far as that. Will, you must get me a gun right away. I'm going to learn to shoot! Didn't it look nice to see those two birds come down? My, won't they taste good broiled, with a little hot butter and pepper and salt over them, and some nice cream gravy on the side!"

Well, well, well! Wasn't that enough to warm my old bachelor heart? And when I looked at her and saw how bright her eyes were, how beautifully her cheeks were tinted with a color not of man's making, how interested and enthused she was, I could not but think what a pity it was that our fair ladies did not oftener brighten and gladden the chase.

Arriving at the head of the canal where the swamp opened out before us we saw many birds pitching down into the upper part of the marsh. I knew where they were going and expected to have some fine sport there. Looking a little ahead we were electrified to see eight large mallards drop into a little hole not ninety yards away. The horses were drawn back almost on their haunches in our hurried stop, and rapid preparations were made for a "sneak" on those audacious birds. Chic had been placed in the carriage before that so that she might not alarm any ducks. Will hastily drew his gun out of the case and was about to put it together when I stopped him.

"For heavens sake, Will, don't do that!" I exclaimed.

It was a very sandy country where we were and the sand had drifted into the carriage and found its way into his case. The breech of the barrels and the end of the stock were coated with sand which had collected on the oil, and he was about to put his gun together regardless of the sand, and without even wiping it off.

"What's the matter?" he asked, looking at me with anxious eyes, for he was fairly trembling with eagerness to get at those mallards.

"You've got a brand new gun and you are doing the very best thing you can to ruin it in very short order. Don't you see that sand?" said I.

"Oh, that don't make any difference," he replied.

"Don't make any difference! Why, don't you know that that sand will cut out those bearings so that your gun will be as loose as the habits of a professional gambler?" I remarked.

"I thought an L. C. Smith gun couldn't get loose," he replied with a smile as he proceeded to wipe off the sand before he assembled the gun.

"They can't, if they are handled with half the care that a gun ought to be," I retorted, "but you can take a hammer and loosen them or you can file them out with a file, or with emery, or with flint sand. When you get a good gun take good care of it and it will be a pleasure to you all your life."

"But those birds!" exclaimed Will. "They'll fly while you stand here preaching."

"No, they won't. They haven't seen us move since they lit. We are screened behind that clump of willows. The birds are feeding and will stay there all the afternoon unless they are disturbed."

He now being ready we started. We had a long "sneak" to make in the open prairie with nothing but the grass to hide us. After getting around the clump of willows we went forward a little way in a stooping posture and then dropped to our hands and knees. Chic had followed cautiously at our heels, stepping care-

fully and seeming to know as well as we did what we were up to. As we dropped to our hands and knees I made a backward motion with my hand and Chic stopped and sat down. She did not offer to stir, but watched us eagerly. After a little advance in this manner we dropped flat on our stomachs and, by the aid of toes and elbows, wormed ourselves along. At last we could hear the quacking and splashing of the ducks. I knew we were near enough and, touching Will with my elbow, I nodded to him as a signal that he should get ready, and we rose to our feet. What a fluttering and quacking there was among those frightened ducks! As they rose two crossed in the air just as I got a nice aim at one of them. I pulled the trigger in the nick of time and had the satisfaction of seeing both fall. With the second barrel I dropped an old greenhead that was a little slower than the rest in getting in motion.

"I got one, anyway!" said Will.

Only the three had fallen.

"Did you get that last one?" I asked.

"Of course not," he replied. "You shot that after I had shot both barrels, but when we both shot our first barrels two ducks fell. I got one of them."

"Did you aim at it?" I asked.

"Well, no, not exactly at that particular one. They were so thick when they got up that I shot right into the bunch. But I know I must have hit one."

"All right," said I, as I picked up the biggest one and handed it to him. "I guess this is yours." I was morally certain that I had killed all three of the birds, but I would not have claimed them when he thought he had killed one, for anything. I did not want to discourage him, nor did I want to seem selfish. Deliver me from the hunting companion who claims every bird that falls, and who never misses! Especially is that sort of a man a damper on the enthusiasm of a young sportsman. It soon makes the novice feel as though he could not hit a "flock of haystacks" standing still, and he feels disheartened and dispirited. We had no

need for Chic to retrieve, for the water was shallow and we both had on mackintosh hip boots; but I happened to think that she was still sitting back there waiting to be invited to join in the sport, and so I motioned to her. How she did come! As she approached I stretched out my hand with the palm of the hand toward her and she immediately checked her headlong career and quietly dropped in to heel. Then, with the words "dead bird!" I waved her on and let her go in and retrieve the last bird, which had fallen on the farther side of the little pond. Then we motioned to Mrs. J—, who, at the report of the guns, had driven around the clump of willows, and she drove up with the team.

"I saw them fall!" she exclaimed enthusiastically. "Did you get any, Will?"

"I got this one," he replied, proudly holding up a nice, fat greenhead.

"Oh, what a beauty!" she exclaimed, stroking its glossy feathers.

"Yes," I remarked, "they are very beautiful, and if you want me to I will take the skin off these heads and tan it for you, and if we can get a few more, they will make a pretty little cap, or bonnet."

"Oh, I'd like that ever so much," she replied. "I never thought of that, but I should think they would make a beautiful bonnet."

"Let me tell you something, Will," said I. "Never take your chances on firing at a flock of birds. If you want to experiment try it once or twice on a flock of blackbirds. Wait till you see them so thick that it seems impossible for the shot to go through without hitting one, and then give it to them. Shoot right at the thickest part of the bunch and see how many you will get. You'll be surprised at not getting any, but that will be the result nine times out of ten."

"But that's the way I got this one," he protested.

"That was a scratch, the merest accident," I replied, with a quiet smile, for I thought I knew how he got

that one. "It probably wouldn't happen again in a good while."

"What do you do, then?" he asked.

"Always pick out some particular bird and take good aim at it, calculating distance and speed the same as you would if the bird was alone. It is a hard thing to do at first, and requires as much practice as any other part of the sport, but it has to be learned or you will never be successful as a wing shot."

We drove on up toward the place where I had seen the ducks dropping in. Climbing carefully out of the carriage I threw a sack of decoys over my shoulder, motioned Chic to heel, and we started. Going carefully through the brush we soon came to a place where we could part the branches and look through. At about thirty-five yards' distance the water seemed black with ducks; mallards principally, but many pintails, redheads, and a few canvas-backs. It was all I could do to keep Will from shooting. In fact it was about all I wanted to do to keep myself from shooting.

"Why not?" he inquired, impatiently.

"For this reason," I replied. "We have got all the afternoon before us. We want more than two shots apiece. If we shoot into that flock those that we don't kill will go off and not come back again to-day. If we rout them out without much noise or disturbance and then go over to that towhead and set our decoys and conceal ourselves in the blind that I made there last week, they will come back, a half dozen or so at a time, and we will have some fine shooting."

For fear the temptation would prove too strong for both of us, I here parted the covering branches and quietly moved out in front of them. Most of the ducks flew at once, but a few of them couldn't believe that one who came so quietly could have any evil intentions and swam uneasily around, cocking their heads and looking at us with their bright eyes. They soon took flight and we waded across the shallow channel, put out our decoys and ensconced ourselves in our blinds.

Chic was provided with a gunny sack, half filled with straw, to lie on, while she had her own blanket of heavily woolen lined ducking, to cover her. The water that dripped from her ran through the sack and through the straw, while the blanket afforded ample warmth. We had not been there many minutes when the clouds parted and the sun shone out with such seductive warmth that my companion was soon sound asleep. Chic, too, by the gentle snores she emitted, showed that for once the charms of Morpheus had overcome those of fair Diana. Our decoys were of canvas and, as there was a slight current where they were set, they floated and swam around in the most lifelike manner. As I sat watching them a shadow flitted over the ground at my side. Looking up quickly in the direction of the sun I saw a large hawk poising his wings for a swoop on our decoys. Canvas decoys cost money and I didn't care to have them torn by the talons of the hawk. I had hardly comprehended what was going to happen when he closed his wings and shot downward like a cannon ball. I had no time to aim, or even raise my gun, so I just pulled the trigger. At the sound of the gun the hawk spread his wings, stopped his downward flight and tried to get away. But he was too late. A load of sixes, at close range, reached his vitals and he closed his wings and fell. Will jumped up and commenced to upbraid me for not waking him and giving him a shot. Chic looked like an animated interrogation point as she eagerly gazed in every direction to see what I had shot. Seeing the hawk floating down the stream she whined for permission to go and get it. While I was explaining to Will what had happened he commenced to laugh. I looked in the direction he pointed and saw a torn and ragged piece of canvas flapping and tugging at a string, by means of which it was fastened to something at the bottom of the water. Whence comes this horrible suspicion? Can it be possible? Yes, it is! It is one of the decoys that I had tried to save! The first barrel, which

had been shot without looking where it was pointed, had been as disastrous to the decoy as the second barrel had to the hawk.

But quiet soon brooded over our blind again. As we sat there talking, eight or ten mallards came in from behind, and came so quietly that they were preparing to alight when we first saw them.

"SHE DELIBERATELY BACKED OUT OF THE WATER AND DRAGGED THE FIGHTING AND UNWILLING BIRD AFTER HER."

"Now, you take the birds on the left and I'll take those on the right," I whispered, and, as they set their wings, I muttered: "Now!" and four barrels poured forth their deadly hail. We each got one bird and I complimented Will profusely on his skill. He was visibly pleased to get as many as I did, while I felt rather ashamed at not getting more, for it was a beautiful

opportunity. One of the ducks was killed stone dead, but the other, although hard hit, was not killed outright. Chic was sent after them and undertook to retrieve the wounded one first, as she properly should. The duck was trying hard to dive, but the nature of its injuries was such that it could not quite get under water. It could get its head and back down, but could get no farther and this left its tail fluttering and struggling above the water. Chic seized this and attempted to lift the bird up. She got it partly out of the water when the feathers slipped through her teeth and the duck fell back again. Again she grabbed the deceptive tail feathers and tried to lift the duck up so as to fetch it out, and again the tail feathers slipped between her teeth. Two or three times this was repeated, the duck meanwhile continuing its frantic struggles. Then Chic, having lost the duck the third or fourth time, seemed to understand that although she could not lift that bird out of the water by its tail, yet she could drag it, for she took another hold, and instead of trying to lift the bird up she deliberately backed out of the water and dragged the fighting and unwilling bird after her. It was a comical sight. Having gotten the bird out of the water it was at her mercy and she soon laid it at my feet and went back after the other one. From that time on the birds continued coming back to their favorite feeding spot and we had fine and regular shooting until it was time to start home. We went back to the carriage and found Mrs. J— patiently awaiting us. She had amused herself looking up vari-colored grasses, had found a quail's nest, had seen a hawk catch a bird, and altogether had not found the time monotonous. She had heard our shots and was anxious to know what we had killed, and was delighted when she saw our success. On the way back Mrs. J— again called our attention to Chic. She was making a rather uncertain point, but still it was evident that there was something there. Will and I got out of the carriage and

walked toward her, when we saw something moving in the grass ahead of her.

"What is that?" I asked.

"Looks like a goose," said Will.

"A goose!" I exclaimed. "It's rather early for geese, and then who ever heard of a lone goose out on the prairie that way?"

Nevertheless a goose it was, for just then it came into plain view.

"It must be badly wounded," said I, "to be off here on the prairie all alone."

As if to controvert my statement the goose rose and flew. We watched it and saw that it lit over in the sandhills about six or seven hundred yards from where we were. I was satisfied that it was or had been wounded, but it could not be very badly hurt or it could not fly that far. We went after it, and when we got nearly there a dispute arose as to which way the bird had gone. So Will went one way and I another to look for it. Chic was ranging in front of me and hunting most happily. Suddenly she stopped, sniffed the air suspiciously, and then commenced to road. The grass was long and tangled; there were some wild rose bushes there, on the buds of which the grouse feed, and altogether it was a very likely looking place for grouse. I debated with myself whether it was grouse or that goose, and opened my gun to put in some smaller shot instead of the twos I had in, when Chic pointed. I reflected that the twos would kill a grouse, while sixes might not kill a goose. I closed the gun again and walked up and flushed the goose, for that was what it was, and, letting it get away about thirty yards, knocked it down. Chic retrieved it nicely, but protested that from quails to prairie chickens, from prairie chickens to mallards, and from mallards to geese was quite a progression, and that if the birds continued to get heavier in this ratio she would soon have to have a basket. It struck me as rather odd to

be hunting geese on the prairie with a pointer dog, which is the reason why I mention the incident.

On the way home Will asked me where I got my shooting clothes.

"Why," said I, "this coat I bought here in A——, at the hardware store. I took it to the tailor and had him put in this lining. The coat is of heavy ducking, wind and water proof, the lining is what tailors call blanket lining and is very heavy woolen. It makes a good, warm, wind and water proof coat, is dead grass color, and will not tear easily. The pants are of the same stuff and lined the same way. They cost more than the coat, because I had to have them made. The coat can be bought at any gun store for from a dollar and a half to two dollars; your wife can line it for you. I like them much better than I do corduroy. Corduroy is neither wind nor water proof; it is too light and cool for Winter and too heavy for Summer. If you have occasion to crawl, as you frequently do in duck hunting, your knees are wet the very first thing, if you wear corduroys. A good, heavy, dead grass color canvas coat and pants, well lined, are the proper garments for Fall and Winter shooting. Then I always wear a skeleton coat like this, too. It is handier to carry shells and game, and can be slipped on or off in a jiffy. It will go on over any coat. You can wear it without any coat at all, or you can put it on over your overcoat. Then you also need a cap, a heavy overcoat, well lined, and a rubber-filled waterproof coat for rainy weather. With such an outfit, with mackintosh hip boots, you are fixed for any kind of weather."

"What do you wear in Summer?"

"Oh, wear out your old clothes. It doesn't make any difference what you wear for field work. Anything that is comfortable and does not tear too easily will do for that."

My feet beginning to feel tired with my heavy boots, I pulled off the latter and slipped on a pair of shoes which I had with me. The mackintosh waders being

large and heavy, I always wore a pair of shoes until I was ready to use the boots, and carried the boots in the buggy.

"What kind of shoes are those?" asked Will, as he picked one up and began to examine it.

"Well, that is something new," I replied. "I have always had a great deal of trouble with my feet. They are very tender and the heavy boots and shoes generally used for hunting always hurt me. Did you ever wear any cardovan shoes?"

"Why, yes," said he, looking rather puzzled at the sudden change of the subject.

"Well," said I, "you know how they last. Can hardly wear them out. Well, cardovans are made of horsehide; at least so I am told, so when I saw this shoe advertised in the AMERICAN FIELD and it was claimed to be made of horsehide, I thought that it would be a good wearing shoe. The advertisement went on to say that it was oil tanned and soft as a glove, and it immediately occurred to me that that was just what I needed for my tender feet. I had my measure taken by a home shoemaker and sent it on to the maker of these shoes. He made the shoes and sent them on to me. They are a perfect fit, although I had them made a little large purposely, and they have never given me a moment's discomfort. No cruel breaking in was necessary, but they felt comfortable and easy the very first time I ever put them on. See how soft they are! They are warranted not to get hard. They are perfectly waterproof and what is of equal importance, dust proof. Many a time I have been out in the field and come home with my feet and socks perfectly hideous with dust and sand which had sifted through my shoes, but that never happens with this shoe. They are soft and easy as a glove, and as for wear—I do not believe they will ever wear out."

"That is a queer sole. What is it?" queried Will.

"It is what is called electric sole. I do not know exactly what it is, but it is made of cowhide tanned by

a new process. You see there are two thicknesses of it and they are cemented together with a rubber cement, making it impossible for any water or dampness to get through. They are also soft and pliable, as you see, and are the easiest walking shoe that I ever had on. They are handmade and handsewed, and do not look bad either."

"Guess I'll have to get a pair of them," remarked Will. "My feet gall some in hot weather when I do much walking."

"Well, you will never miss it if you get a pair of shoes like these. My feet never gall in these shoes. They used to in spite of all I could do. I have a pair of boots of the same material, too. They are eighteen inches high and are simply perfect for snipe or marsh hunting, or for any work that doesn't require deep wading. I wouldn't be without these boots and shoes for anything if I couldn't get any more like them."

"I shouldn't think they would make much noise," said Will, eyeing them. "They ought to be a good thing for stalking game of any kind."

"They can't be beat for that," I replied. "They are absolutely noiseless. There is no squeaking or crunching. You can walk as silently as though in rubbers or moccasins."

"Are they very expensive?"

"Not very. They cost no more than any other good shoe. They are well worth their cost, and more too."

It had begun to rain and was now pouring in torrents, and we soon arrived home, dripping wet, but happy and contented.

CHAPTER XXVI

Old Honkers.

Anser Canadensis, Canada goose, cravat goose, big gray goose, big Hutchins goose. Call them what you will, there is no name by which the bird of which this chapter treats is so well and favorably known as "honkers," and generally with the adjective "old" prefixed. Imagine a group of sportsmen gathered in some gun store of an evening swapping yarns about their last trips, talking about the best loads for breaking targets or discussing the latest feats at the trap with the scattergun. Some are seated on the counter swinging their feet and marring the varnish; some are seated astride of chairs with their arms resting on the backs of the chairs, some are tilted back in their chairs, all in positions of easy comfort, when one of them speaks up, saying:

"Did I ever tell you about my last experience with the *Anser Canadensis?*"

Well, what did you say happened? Threw him out, did they? Well, do you blame them?

You will never hear that in a gun store, but rather, some fellow with a sweet brier pipe between his teeth, will exclaim:

"You oughter a seen me knock the stuffin' out of an old honker the last time I was out!"

The crowd looks eagerly for the coming yarn.

I had been watching the flight of the geese for several days and thought I knew where they came into the river. It was late in the Fall and the geese had been coming in for a week or more and were now with us

in profusion. They roosted on the sandbars in the river. Each morning at the faintest indication of dawn they rose in great flocks and went out into the stubbles and cornfields to feed. About ten or eleven o'clock they returned to the river to drink, paddle around in the water, and sleep on the sandbars. About two o'clock in the afternoon they went out again and returned again about sundown. This was their regular program on pleasant days. On stormy and cloudy days their behavior was somewhat different. On such days they would not go out so early in the morning, and frequently would not come in until four or five o'clock in the afternoon, and then not go out again that night, making only one trip instead of two. They always go out against the wind, returning with it. I suppose they find it easier to fly against the wind before they have dined heavily than afterward. They go out with empty crops and come back, with the wind, with full ones. Having located the flight of the birds I dropped into Will's store one day and asked him how he would like to take a trip after them in the morning.

"I've only been waiting for you to say the word," he replied.

"All right, we'll try them to-morrow."

"Do we have to start very early?" he inquired, somewhat anxiously.

"No, not very. Seven o'clock will do for river shooting. You see, they are on the sandbars all night and they keep a good lookout. It would be impossible to sneak up on them. When they go out they fly pretty high, and we couldn't get a shot at them then. If we were going out into the stubble to shoot from a blind, then we would have to get up very early so as to be in the stubble before the birds arrived. In river shooting we can't expect to get any shooting as they go out, but we want to be on hand to give them a warm reception when they return to the river in the middle of the day. If we start by seven, or seven-thirty, it will give us plenty of time. We have about an hour's

drive, and then must wade into the river over to a towhead I have marked. We have no blind to build, for I attended to that a week ago."

"What's a towhead?" asked Will.

"Why, it's one of those little islands, or sandbars, covered with long grass and brush and undergrowth. The birds are pretty apt to shy them, but I know a little one right in the line of their flight and so far from shore and from any other towhead that they don't seem to pay very much attention to it. I went out there and looked it over. It is an ideal place. It is high enough to be dry; there is growth enough on it to afford ample concealment, and there are good places to set decoys on each side of the towhead. Right at the highest part of the land there are a couple of small bushes and at their feet grows a grapevine. It was only a few minutes' work to train this grapevine around the bushes in such a way as to make a capital blind."

"Do we want to set decoys on each side of the towhead?"

"Oh, no; that is not necessary. We will set our decoys according to the way the wind blows. You see the birds come in from their feeding grounds with the wind. Now, if the wind is blowing from north to south, then the birds will come in from the north. But they always light against the wind. So in order to alight they have got to swing and come back up the wind. Now, we must set our decoys to the north of our blind so that the birds can see them readily when they come in. But if we set them exactly north, then the birds coming in from the north will go past the decoys, turn and come up to them from the south so as to alight against the wind. This will bring them exactly over our blind and that makes, for me, at least, a hard shot. But suppose we set our decoys in the above case northwest of our blind, say four or five yards north and ten to fifteen yards west, according to the surroundings. Then the birds coming in

from the north, swinging and coming up to the decoys against the wind, will prepare to alight among the decoys and will give us beautiful side shots, which are the easiest as well as the most deadly at a distance of not more than thirty to thirty-five yards, and probably less."

"Got that figured down fine, haven't you?"

"Well, you've got to figure things down pretty fine if you expect to get honkers. They're the wariest birds we have to deal with in this country."

"What kind of decoys have you got?"

"I've got a couple dozen galvanized iron profiles. They're first rate. Geese decoy easily if you are in their line of flight and keep still. The fellow that can keep still and not even wink when the birds are coming right at him is the fellow who will get them. They are very sharp-eyed, and the slightest motion is marked by them; then you'll hear some old fellow give a warning squawk and they'll all begin to climb up out of sight. But as for decoys, they are easily made. If you want real cheap ones get some good broad shingles, whittle out the shape of the body of the goose, getting a decoy like mine for a copy. Then take another piece of shingle and whittle out the head and neck. Fasten this onto the body with a slim screw so that it can be folded down, tack a stick onto the bottom to stick into the ground, paint it a good color, similar to that of the goose, and there you have it, a cheap decoy and a good one, too. The best decoy, however, I think, is the canvas one. Their cost is the only objection to them. They are very expensive, and are easily injured or destroyed. My decoys are the iron ones with folding neck and leg. They are good and substantial and are not easily injured, but they are pretty heavy to carry very far."

"Shall we take a lunch?"

"Oh, yes. Take a good, big one, too. We'll stay all day, and we'll get ravenously hungry. We've got an

elegant blind and, if it's a good day, we'll have some nice sport."

"Will you take Chic?"

"Oh, I guess not. A dog is generally a nuisance when hunting geese. Don't have much use for one then."

"Oh, take her along. She minds so well you'll have no trouble in keeping her still. See how she looks at you right now. She knows what we are talking about and is begging to go."

Chic sat on her haunches, turning her bright eyes from one to the other of us, and certainly appeared to know what we were saying. As Will concluded his little plea in her behalf, she jumped up, put her paws up pleadingly and whined a little, and who can deny that she spoke and begged to go? It was more than I could stand and I said:

"Oh, well, I'll think about it."

Next morning about seven-thirty Will and I were on our way up the river; Chic ran along beside us and hunted every fence corner and promising nook most industriously. Here is another departure from your rule, says someone. Well, it is said that it is the exception that proves the rule. This was a cold morning in Winter. There was ice on the river and little patches of snow here and there. There was no work for Chic to do at the end of the drive. She would be cool enough to have a good nose even if she did run, and if she was not it would not make much difference anyway. It was better for her to run and keep herself warm by circulating the blood than it was to have her sit shivering in the buggy; so I let her run. No particular rule can be given which can be rigidly adhered to in all cases; judgment must be used.

A ride of about an hour brought us to a place opposite our blind. The river here was fully a mile wide and full of sandbars and towheads, between which the water flowed, occasionally with a very swift current, but generally rather placidly. Ice had formed

over most of these places, but here and there was a channel deeper and swifter than the rest in which the current ran deep and strong. The river was not deep at any place, and a man with waders could wade it anywhere; but there were several places where a man with only hip boots must go carefully. Another great danger to be guarded against was quicksand. The treacherous river was full of this shifting death. You could wade a place in safety one day and the next day on attempting the same place go to your neck in the quicksand. It was unsafe for one person to go alone.

We jumped out of the buggy, unhitched the horses, tied them to the fence and threw down an armful of hay for each horse, got out our guns, decoys, etc., and prepared to start. The guns were left in their cases and our overcoats were carried on our arms, for should we get swamped in the quicksand and get thoroughly wet, a good dry coat would be a good thing to ride home in. Chic's overcoat was also carried along.

Putting one foot on the bottom wire of the barbed wire fence, and lifting the next wire up with my hand, Will crawled through. Then he performed the same good office for me and I followed him. Chic didn't need any such assistance. We plunged our way through the first shallow channel, across a towhead and then another channel, and so on toward our blind. The blind was situated on the last towhead out from our side of the river. It was more than half a mile from our shore, and between it and the farther side of the river was one solid sheet of ice. The river sweeping around our towhead formed a current which had prevented the ice from forming, and at the southern end, about fifteen yards from the blind, the towhead sloped off into a sandbar which was an ideal place for decoys when the wind was from the south, as it was then. The birds would come in from the west and south, and this towhead presented the first open water and sand-

bar for them. There was nothing to obstruct the view of the decoys and they could see them for miles.

"Now, Will," said I, when we arrived at the blind, "you set out the decoys and I'll fix up the blind."

I called Chic in and made a place for her in one corner, bade her lie down, and then fixed her blanket over her to make her comfortable, took the guns out of their cases and put them together, loaded them and leaned them up against the brush inside the blind. Then I looked to see how Will was getting along, and could not repress a smile. He had the two dozen decoys set out in a row with their heads all pointing one way.

"That will never do, Will," said I.

"Why not?" asked he.

"Why you've got their heads all pointed one way, and all pointed up wind at that. The birds will come in from that direction and they will be looking right at the edge of the profiles. They cannot see them at all that way. Besides that, when the birds are frightened at anything they always line up that way and all have their heads up. We must put them in more natural positions. They must be faced in all directions, so that no matter from which direction the birds come in they will always have the flat side of some of the decoys presented to their view. Then we must put some of them with their heads down as though drinking or picking at the sand, and some of them must be seated as though sunning themselves."

We then rearranged the decoys and got them all nicely set out. This done we proceeded leisurely to the blind and made ourselves comfortable. It was about nine-thirty and I expected the flight to begin about ten o'clock.

"Did you bring the sixes that I told you to?" I asked Will.

"Yes, I brought seventy-five."

"That's good. We ought to get some ducks out here this afternoon."

About fifteen minutes after ten I saw a long line of black over the hills to the west and south.

"Mark!" I exclaimed. "See them over there?"

"No, I don't see anything," replied Will, already showing traces of excitement.

"Look away over the hills there; just over that house. See?"

"Oh, yes; I see them. Are they coming this way? Do you think they'll see our decoys? You must tell me when to shoot!"

"Now, see here, Will; just keep your head, don't get rattled; when I tell you to shoot take good aim at your bird and be sure and get him. I'll tell you how much to lead him."

The long line grew more and more distinct. At last a faint "Ah—unk" was borne to our expectant ears. Nearer and nearer swept the birds until now each separate form could be clearly discerned.

"Now, Will," I whispered, "keep perfectly still. Don't move for your life! Never mind whether you can see them or not. I'll coach you."

On came the great birds, making straight for our place of concealment. When over the ice and about one hundred and fifty yards from us, they swerved to go on up the river. I called twice and they answered with a great gabble. A half dozen or so left the main flock and started for our decoys, then wheeled and joined the flock again. They went some two hundred yards above us, then the leader circled and the whole flock, like trained soldiers, followed him. Now he was coming up the wind right toward us.

"Call them!" whispered Will in a trembling voice.

"Not for the world! Be absolutely quiet and immovable," I replied in a scarcely audible whisper.

On came the noble game; now we could hear the coarse rustle of their mighty pinions as they beat the air. Oh, the thrilling excitement of such a moment! Oh, the tingling of each nerve, the rush of hot blood through distended arteries! What use to call when

the birds are continually coming nearer? Now we could almost see their great, round eyes! Now they set their wings to alight among the decoys! Now the great, black legs were dropped down, and the black webbed feet thrust out! Now, now is the time!

"Aim right at the butt of the wing of the leader.

"OH, THE THRILLING EXCITEMENT OF SUCH A MOMENT."

Aim carefully. Now!" The injunction was whispered and at the last word we rose to our knees and fired. I took two birds several yards back of the leader and had the pleasure of seeing each of them drop dead at the crack of the gun. It was an equal gratification to me to see the noble leader fold his wings and come to the ice with a resounding crash. Will had killed his

first goose! The strain was too much for him, however, and his second barrel was fired at random "on the band" and was without result.

"Hi-yi-yi-yi!" yelled Will, as he stood up and brandished his gun.

"Shut up there!" I snarled savagely, and grabbing his coat I pulled him on his back into the blind.

"What's the matter?" asked he, disconcertedly.

"Why, we might have got another shot at them if you had kept still. Sometimes, if the birds don't discover where the danger is, they will wheel and come back to the decoys. It is true they are not very apt to do it, but then it is possible. I've seen them do it. Indeed, when there is only one or two of them, it is not at all unusual to see them return. With a large flock like this, however, it is not very likely. But, for all that, when you are out after as wary a bird as the wild goose it is not good policy to be executing a war dance right in the camp of the enemy."

"I see," said Will. "Excuse me, old man. I won't do it again. That was my first goose, you know."

"Yes, I know; and I well remember the first goose I got. I killed him with the first barrel and was so elated that I did not fire the second barrel at all, but just threw down my gun and rushed out and fell down on that goose to make sure it wouldn't get away."

"Well, let's go out and get the birds," said Will.

"Wait a minute. The birds can't get away. Never stir from the blind until you are satisfied that there is not a goose in sight. Look all around, toward every point of the compass. There, mark!"

"Where? Where?" exclaimed Will.

"Same place that the other flock came from. See?"

"Yes, I see them!"

"Now keep perfectly quiet and see if you can't get both your birds this time."

Again the birds came swiftly in in almost the exact line of flight of their predecessors. Again they flew past us, circled and came back and, just as they were

about to alight, I gave the word. What was the matter I am sure I don't know. We got feathers but no birds. Will was very much disappointed, and so was I, but I could only say that such things would happen and we must take the bitter with the sweet. Scanning the horizon again after the second flock had gone, and seeing no birds anywhere, we ran out and picked up our three dead birds. I had some sticks which I had sharpened at both ends while we were sitting in the blind waiting for the first flock. Taking these out I thrust one end through the under part of the bird's head and then placed the bird on the sand at the water's edge and thrust the other end of the stick down into the sand to support the head. This done I smoothed out the feathers, laid the wings nicely along the sides of the birds and made very nice, lifelike decoys out of them. I had hardly got them set out when the soft, sonorous "ah—unk" greeted my ears. Hastily scrambling to my feet I rushed for the blind. Two lone geese were sailing up the wind toward the decoys. They must have seen me, for they sheered off and passed about sixty yards from us.

"It's a long shot, Will," said I, "but I guess it's our only show. Hold about ten feet ahead of the first one. Now!"

At the word the guns cracked but the birds kept right on.

"Well, you see, that was my fault. I should have kept a better lookout. You, too, ought to have been on the lookout and told me that those birds were coming. Now, you see, we've lost them. Mark! They're coming back!"

It was even so, and as I grumbled at our lack of alertness the two big birds wheeled and came slowly back up the river. We were safely ensconsed in our blind and took good care to make no mistake this time. On they came, eyeing our decoys askance. When they were right opposite us I said:

"Aim right at the bill of the leader. Now!"

Again our guns cracked together and, as though struck with the same missile of death, the two great beauties threw their heads over on their backs and collapsed. It was death in midair! We retrieved our birds and I took them and set them at the edge of the water, on the sand, with their heads tucked under their wings as though asleep. After congratulating ourselves on our good luck, Will asked:

"Why did you tell me to aim right at the butt of the wing the first time and right at the bill this time?"

"Because the first time we shot the birds were just hovering over our decoys and were almost motionless. It was not necessary to lead them at all. In this last shot, however, they were about twenty-five yards away and were flying slowly; that is, at the estimated rate of about fifteen miles an hour. If you aimed at the bill you would just about catch the body in the center of your pattern."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, that is easily demonstrated. You can figure it in your head. Say, for example, that the bird is just thirty-three and one-third yards away. That is just one hundred feet. If it is flying fifteen miles an hour it flies one mile in four minutes. That is 5,280 feet in four minutes. Divide this by four and we find that the bird flies 1,320 feet in one minute. Then dividing that by sixty we find it flies twenty-two feet in one second. Now, your shot leaves the muzzle of the gun at an average velocity of 1,000 feet per second. If your bird is one hundred feet distant it is plain that it will take the shot one-tenth of a second to reach it. But we have seen that the bird flies twenty-two feet in one second, so that in one-tenth of a second it will fly two and two-tenths feet, and so we must hold, to be exact, two and two-tenths feet ahead of it. Of course, you cannot do this mental figuring in practice. You must learn, and can learn it only by experience, to instantly calculate the distance and speed of the bird and aim accordingly. In this case I estimated the dis-

tance at about twenty-five yards. If you aimed at the bill you ought to have caught the body of the birds with your charge, as you aimed about fifteen to eighteen inches ahead of the vital portions of the bird's body."

Will went out and got the birds and, on examination, we found that each bird had three or four shot in the body, while one also had a broken neck and the other had been hit in the head. He took the birds back and we had not long to wait before another flock came in. Our blind was well chosen and we had plenty of shooting until after eleven o'clock, when the flight ceased. After the flight ceased we took things easy, keeping a sharp watch, however, for ducks, at which we got an occasional shot.

The birds had spent the day on a sandbar about a mile below us, and about half past three o'clock they began to get uneasy and I looked for them to start back for the fields again. Sure enough they soon began to rise in small bands, circle around a little and return. After they had kept this up for some time one of these small parties of about twenty geese came sailing up to the river to our left. They hugged the bank pretty close and we moaned because we were not over there. But we had hardly given utterance to our lament when they wheeled and came down the river again, straight over us. I had been caught unawares and was outside the blind. I had no time to get inside and so sank down on the ground outside. I was effectually hidden from the geese, but they were also effectually hidden from me. From inside the blind Will could look through the interlaced branches and see the birds, but I could not.

"You must give the word, Will," I whispered, "and be sure you do not give it too soon."

There I crouched and waited until suddenly Will exclaimed: "Now!" I raised up and looked around at the birds and saw at once that they were too far away. There was nothing else to do, however, and we fired both barrels in the hope of scratching one down, but

we were unsuccessful. Will was very much chagrined, but I consoled him:

"Never mind that," said I. "Old hunters will make that mistake sometimes. It is a good thing to remember, however, that when a bird is coming toward you it isn't getting any farther away and you cannot very well wait too long. If we had let those birds come right over us and then shot at them from behind, it would have been good planning. That is a mistake that the beginner at goose shooting makes more frequently than any other. The birds are so large that he does not realize how far away they are. He is accustomed to estimating distances on ducks, prairie chickens, etc., and he will almost invariably shoot at geese when they are away out of range, because they are so large that they look to be much closer than they really are. Then again the birds fly faster than they appear to, and the beginner will shoot behind them for a long time."

From this time on the shooting was fast and furious. Many ducks were mingled with the throng and we accumulated widgeons, pintails, teals and bluebills. It seemed as though the geese would never stop flying over us. Our twos were exhausted and we shot sixes at them. At forty yards I put a hole under the wing of a goose with sixes that I could put two fingers in. The shot had balled. Chic had had an easy time. I did not care to have her go into the icy water any more than was necessary and we had been able to retrieve most of the birds ourselves. At last I shot a goose which set its wings and sailed nearly two hundred yards before it fell. Chic watched it fall and wanted to go after it, and I gave her permission. Almost instantly I regretted it. She had to swim the channel which I have mentioned. It was about twenty yards wide and full of floating ice. She sprang in without the slightest hesitation and I would not call her back. Climbing out on the ice on the other side, she raced away after the game. Taking a good grip on the dead

bird she started back. Approaching the channel a large cake of ice was seen coming down. It was so large that it almost filled up the channel, and my heart sank as I thought what if Chic should be run down by that and borne under the water? But she was fully equal to the emergency. As the huge cake swept by it

"SHE LEAPED THE INTERVENING SPACE WITH THE TEN OR TWELVE POUND HONKER."

approached within about two feet of her side of the channel and she leaped the intervening space with the ten or twelve pound honker as easily as though it had been a quail, trotted unconcernedly across the shaking and careening ice cake, plunged in on the side toward me, swam a few yards through the intervening water, and delivered the dead goose into my hands. She was still only a puppy eighteen months old! Proud of her? well, I should think I was!

Darkness was approaching and, although the shooting was yet good, I did not relish the idea of finding our way back through that treacherous river, and through those channels of icy water after dark, so we began to make preparations for our departure. Will went out to take up the decoys while I tied the game into convenient bunches. The guns lay on the bank in front of me. Suddenly Will called: "Mark!" I hastily seized my gun and turned just in time to see some birds going past with the speed of the wind. I had barely time to throw the gun to my shoulder and pull the trigger. Even as I pressed the trigger I realized that I would shoot behind. Pushing the gun ahead about six feet I pulled the second trigger and I thought I had killed the whole flock. Six ducks fell, one after another, and when I went to pick them up I was delighted to find that they were all redheads. All things must come to an end, and at last we were on our laborious way across the ice to the place where we had left our team. I carried my gun, two cranes, six or eight geese, about a dozen ducks and one dozen iron decoys. It was enough. Thus weighted I endeavored to step off the edge of the ice into a channel nearly hip deep. Will was longer limbed than I and had already crossed in safety. Just as I had one foot nearly to the bottom of the river, the other still resting on the ice, the ice gave way and down I went. In vain I endeavored to regain my equilibrium! The load I had on my back slowly pulled me over and down I went into the icy water. Will sprang in and grasped me by the collar and helped me out, but I hadn't a dry thread on me. I pulled off my boots and poured the water out of them and then pulled off my socks and stood on the ice in my bare feet while I wrung the water out of my socks! Pleasant? Well, hardly. I don't know but I would do it again, though, for another such a day. I did not feel much discomfort during the ride home, and as soon as I arrived I took a good rub with harsh towels and was none the worse for my ducking. Chic did not figure

much in this hunt, except that she retrieved a number of ducks for us; but as long as I live I will never forget the picture my beautiful little pointer made trotting across that piece of moving ice with the dead honker in her mouth.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Deadly Quicksand.

I had hunted a good deal with a man who, for obvious reasons, I will call X—. He kept a store at which I bought many things in his line, and I made it a sort of headquarters and spent many of my evenings there. He was very fond of hunting and had all the paraphernalia necessary for the thorough enjoyment of the chase. I had taught Chic to go to his store after any little articles that I might require which she could carry, principally cigars. This was done by going out with her one day, placing an envelope in her mouth and saying: "Take it to the store!" I then walked down to the store with her, opened the door for her, and when she ran in one of the clerks came and took the envelope out of her mouth. After two or three days of this practice I started out with her as usual. It was only a block from my office to the store. She ran on ahead and I stopped. When she got about half way she looked around and saw that I was not coming and she stopped, too. "Take it to the store," called I, at the same time waving my hand. She went on a little way and stopped again. Then I walked up a little way and repeated the command. She turned and ran to the store and, the door being open, ran in and delivered the paper to one of the clerks and then came running back to me as fast as she could to see if she had done right. I petted and praised her and the lesson was learned. All that remained was practice, and as it amused people to see her do it, she got plenty of that. She was more eager to do it than any of the

other tricks she had learned, for she generally got a piece of candy when she got to the store. I would write down what I wanted on a piece of paper, tell her to take it to the store, they would receive it and put up the package so that her teeth or saliva would not injure it, and send her back with it.

X— had been a very hard drinker, but had succeeded, as everyone thought, in conquering his disease. Gossips told me that in his drinking days he was a very dangerous man when in his cups and that his hallucinations frequently amounted to temporary insanity. Business called me out of town during the Winter, and when I returned I was very much surprised and grieved to hear that X— had taken to drinking again. It never occurred to me, however, to pay any particular attention to what I had heard about his partial insanity.

One day X— and I started out after geese. We went to about the same locality described in the last chapter, except that we entered the river about a half mile below where Will and I were, and made our blind on a sandbar instead of on a towhead. As we struggled out to the sandbar I noticed several "soft places" as we neared our bar, but thought nothing particular about them. Neither had I noticed, in the hurry of starting, that my companion had quite a respectable "load" when we left town. I noticed it soon after we got away, however, when he drew a quart bottle out of his overcoat pocket and offered me a drink. I refused and endeavored to persuade him not to drink any more, but he only laughed at me. I felt uneasy, for I did not particularly enjoy the anticipation of a whole day on a sandbar with a drunken man, as I thought he would soon be. If he should become too much overpowered by the liquor to take care of himself, how would I ever get him off the sandbar and out of the river? I could not leave him there exposed to the weather; what would I do? These and other similarly unpleasant thoughts occupied my mind as we drove along and I

listened to his rambling talk. I remarked that it was not a good day for geese and I guessed we had better go back. I suddenly thought of important business that ought to be attended to that day, and finally was attacked with a terrible headache. But all to no purpose. He would not go back. We arrived at the river, tied our horses and unloaded our stuff. Then we gathered up our guns, decoys, lunch, etc., and placing the load upon our backs started across the river to our blind. It was with many misgivings that I helped my half-drunken comrade through the swift channels and over the shifting and treacherous sand. I cursed my carelessness in not noticing his condition before we started and wondered what would be the outcome. We arrived at the blind finally and set out our decoys, assembled our guns, made a place in the blind for Chic, and awaited the arrival of the geese. My companion beguiled the time with maudlin stories, and suddenly sprang out of the blind and began to sing and dance. Just then I saw a long line of black in the horizon that betokened the speedy arrival of the first of the honkers.

"Mark, X—!" I called. "Southwest!"

"To thunder with the geese!" he yelled, but the hunter's instinct in him induced him to spring back into the blind and quietly, but nervously, await their arrival. The birds swung in nicely and we each got two, one of which fell, wing-tipped, a long way off and was retrieved by Chic. During the flight which followed X— kept reasonably quiet, but kept taking sips out of the bottle which he had brought with him in spite of my earnest protests. The flight ceased about half-past eleven o'clock and I suggested that we might as well pick up our birds and go home; that there was no use waiting for the evening flight as we already had enough. He would not listen to the proposition and insisted on staying. As yet I had thought of no danger and nothing worse than inconvenience and bother had entered my mind.

My companion would eat no lunch, but kept resorting to the bottle which, to my great relief, was now nearly emptied. Finally the last drop was drained and the bottle thrown away, but had hardly struck the sand where it was thrown when, to my inexpressible horror, he put his hand in his "pistol pocket" and drew out a pint flask. It seemed to me miraculous that he had not gone to sleep before this, but he did not even stagger. The liquor seemed to have no effect upon him except to make him nervous. Suddenly he accused me of shooting a goose that was coming on his side. Thinking to appease him I told him he might have all the birds if he wanted them. Now I knew he generally gave away all the birds he got, and that he would not care for the birds themselves, and I might have known, had I thought of it, that it was the shot which aggravated him and not the possession of the birds.

"Do you mean to insult me?" he yelled. "Don't you suppose I can kill all the birds I want without asking you to give me any? I'll show you whether I can kill birds or not!" and he seized his gun and advanced upon me threateningly.

There were no birds in sight, and knowing there would not be for some time, we were out of the blind walking around on the sand. I looked at him and saw a crazy gleam in his eye, and now, for the first time, I remembered what I had been told about his dangerous and maniacal tendencies when in liquor. Like a flash came to me all the particulars that had been told me, and I remembered in particular how one man had said: "When X— drinks and don't get drunk or good natured, then look out for him."

"Why, of course you are a good shot, X—," said I, soothingly. "Haven't you killed more birds to-day than I have?"

"Then what the devil do you mean by offering to give me all the birds?" he demanded, angrily.

During this colloquy he had been advancing slowly

toward me and was now within a few feet of me. He carried the gun so that it pointed directly at my stomach, his thumb on the safety. Like a flash I remembered how one time, when our talk happened to drift upon the subject of vital wounds, he had said that the worst place to shoot a man was in the bowels; that a man shot there might live for several days, but that eventually he must die. As he asked me the last ques-

"HE SEIZED HIS GUN AND ADVANCED UPON ME THREATENINGLY."

tion I saw that the critical moment had come. Suddenly I stooped down, and as I came up I swept out and up with my right arm, knocking the barrels of the gun upward. At the same time I seized the gun with my left hand and tried to wrest it from him. As I struck the gun both barrels were discharged, either from his pressure of the triggers or from the jolt, and to this fact I probably owe my life. Now began the most fearful struggle I ever had, or ever thought of.

My life depended upon my getting that gun, and I now had a perfect maniac to deal with. His strength was doubled by his frenzy; I was fighting for life and felt that I had the strength of three ordinary men. Back and forth we surged, each keeping a firm grip on the gun and trying to wrest it from the other. His face was close to mine, his teeth were clinched, his lips parted, and through them his hot breath fanned my cheek. We each had on big, heavy boots and these aided in exhausting us. In our struggles I did not notice that the sand was getting softer and softer until suddenly, and almost without warning, my adversary sank to his hips. At the same moment, by a superhuman effort, he wrested the gun from my grasp. As he did so I felt the sand yielding beneath me and instinctively threw myself at full length and began worming myself away. With a yell of triumph, he pointed the gun at me and snapped both barrels, but both were empty. In order to rest better during our nooning we had both thrown off our shooting coats and he had no more shells with him. By this time I was some ten or twelve feet away and, with a howl of disappointed rage, he threw the gun at me. I was just attempting to rise and the whirling missile struck me between the shoulders and knocked me headlong.

My first thought was to secure the gun, which I did, and carried it to the blind. There I sat down, thoroughly exhausted, and watched his futile attempts to free himself from the sand. With some satisfaction and a sense of returning safety, I saw him sink deeper and deeper as he struggled to free himself. He had on waders which came up to his breast and were fastened by straps over his shoulders. Then it occurred to me that I could not sit there and see him perish before my eyes. What should I do? To pull him out meant another struggle with him, and I felt that I was unable to cope with him. As a first measure of safety I took both guns and started for the nearest towhead with them, taking both shooting coats, with the shells, along

with me. Arriving there I looked around and saw that he was in the treacherous sand nearly up to his armpits. He was in over the tops of his waders, and I thought there was now no escape for him. Hurriedly casting my eyes about I saw some brush lying on the towhead. Quickly gathering up four or five of the largest branches I ran back to him. He was still cursing me and threatening death to me when he should get out. Going as near to him as I dared, I threw two of the branches to him and told him to put them under his arms. With blind fury he threw them back at me, spear-fashion, again. Again I threw them out to him, talking soothingly to him, and tried to pacify him. This time he evidently realized his position, for he tucked the two branches under his arms and tried to climb out on them.

Taking two more of the branches and dragging them after me, I started for the shore, intending to go for help and return for him. I had gone but a little way when I felt the sand giving way beneath me. Instead of throwing myself full length, as I should have done, I turned and tried to go back. The hesitation was nearly fatal. The treacherous sand gave way beneath me and I sank considerably over my boot tops and nearly to my waist. In vain I struggled to free myself. I loosened the straps to my boots and tried to pull myself out of them for the tops were very loose, but the sand had poured in at the top and packed around my feet and I could not. I then ceased my struggles, gathered my precious branches under my arms and tried to think of some way out of my terrible predicament. Casting my eyes toward X—, I was horrified to see that he was nearly out. He had worked himself up on the branches I had thrown him, had unfastened the straps that held up his waders, and was crawling out of them. His waders had come up so much higher than my boots that the sand had not packed around his feet, and slowly but surely he was freeing himself. Again I renewed my struggles but

only to settle deeper, and I therefore ceased my efforts. He was now quiet, but was working with might and main, straining every muscle, and gradually extricating himself. At last he was out and lying full length on the sand. Then he commenced worming himself, snake fashion, toward solid ground.

When he felt the sand hard beneath him he sprang up with a yell and ran toward the blind. He found both guns and the shells gone and was furious in his disappointment. Turning around, his eyes fell upon the branches with which he had helped himself out, and at the same time he took in my helpless condition. The torrent of his abuse broke forth once more, and again casting himself full length upon the sand, he crawled back and got one of the branches. Back to solid ground he again crawled and began trimming one of the branches by breaking off the smaller limbs. With blood almost congealing with agony I realized that he meant to make a club of the very instrument which I had brought for his preservation, with which to beat me to death.

Having trimmed the branch to his satisfaction he looked at me again. The sight seemed to imbue him with new hatred and vigor, and, brandishing the club over his head, he yelled with blood-curdling ferocity. In his new-born idea he seemed to forget the treacherous sand from which he had just escaped, and with a maniacal laugh started fiercely toward me. He came on a run, but just as he was within about fifteen feet of me down he went again into the sand. He sank to his waist, and in the rage of his disappointment he hurled the club at me, but it whizzed over my head harmlessly. He was now without anything to assist him, and as he clawed madly at the quivering quagmire he sank deeper and deeper. I was now so deep in the sand that I felt my weight resting on the branches which were tucked under my arms, and I vaguely wondered how long they would keep me up. Then I thought that

possibly the river would rise during the night and we would both be drowned like rats in a trap.

Whether I went to sleep or whether I lost my senses in a swoon, I know not. There seemed to be a period during which I was oblivious to my fearful surroundings. I seemed to be a child again and was playing with some playmates of my youth in my home dooryard. The sun was shining brightly and gentle breezes played through the branches of the old apple trees that even now I remember so well. As we played the scene changed. The bright green and golden faded to a dismal gray and then white; the leaves dropped from off the trees; the ground became covered with snow and the Winter's winds sang dirge-like through the leafless branches. Then one of my playmates, a mischievous girl, suddenly washed my face with a ball of snow.

I awoke, or recovered from my swoon, with a start. Something cold had been on my face, and with a returning hope I saw poor little Chic lying flat on her stomach, her legs spread out, and her cool nose against my cheek. I petted her and stroked her glossy head, while she whined and plainly showed that she knew that something was wrong. Suddenly, like an inspiration, came to me a ray of hope. Groping down into the sand and finding my vest pocket, hoping to find there what I always had with me, and yet doubting, I felt a thrill of joy when my finger touched the point of a lead pencil. Only a lead pencil, but to me the instrument of life. I felt again and found an old letter and drew it out; but it was soaked and nothing could be written upon it. My heart sank again. I stroked Chic's head and thought as hard as ever I did in my life. I looked at her collar. I could not write on that, and if I did it would not be seen. Ah! I have it. When I went to the towhead after the branches, I had put on my hat, which had fallen off during my struggle with X—. It was a canvas shooting hat and inside the sweatband was a strip of linen. In a moment I had it

off and tore out the piece of cloth. Then, wetting my pencil, and writing very slowly and plainly, I wrote:

"——, X— and I are both stuck in the quicksand. For God's sake come quickly and bring help. Bring ropes."

I signed this and, speaking cheerfully to Chic, said: "Up Chic!" She sprang up and stood looking at me, wagging her tail joyfully. Having four feet to stand on, and being light, she did not sink in the sand very much. Placing the cloth in her mouth I said, in a tone of command:

"Take it to the store!"

She looked at me in evident surprise, and I repeated the command and she sprang off with alacrity. Oh, how I watched her! Would she execute her commission under such circumstances? She ran about forty yards and then stopped and looked around at me, and before I could say anything, or motion to her, she started and ran back to me, dropping the cloth on the way. My heart sank, but I did not chide her. I only said:

"Go back and get it."

She ran and picked up the cloth and came back to me again and dropped it in front of me. She knew she had done wrong for she crouched and whined. I thought I understood her. She knew what I wanted but did not want to leave me. I spoke soothingly to her, petted her a little and then replaced the cloth in her mouth and repeated the command. She sprang off as before, ran about forty yards again, and again stopped and looked at me. But this time she did not run back, and I waved my hand to her and cried:

"Go on! Take it to the store!"

Without any more hesitation, without again looking around, she started for the shore. Oh, how eagerly I watched her! On she went over the ice, plunged into the channels and swam them, holding her head high, on over the towheads and through the brush—not in the devious way in which we had come to avoid deep

channels, but in a bee-line. I saw her climb out on the shore a full half mile away. Even then she did not turn her head, but went straight on up through the pasture to the road. I saw her strike the road, but my heart sank again as I saw her go straight across the road instead of turning toward town. For an instant she was lost to my sight as she went through a deep ditch on the other side of the road, and then she came into sight again as she climbed up on the railroad track on the other side of the ditch. And then I saw her settle down into that long, swinging, rapid stride that carried her over the ground so fast. The railroad ran in a bee line to town and was a good half mile nearer than the wagon road.

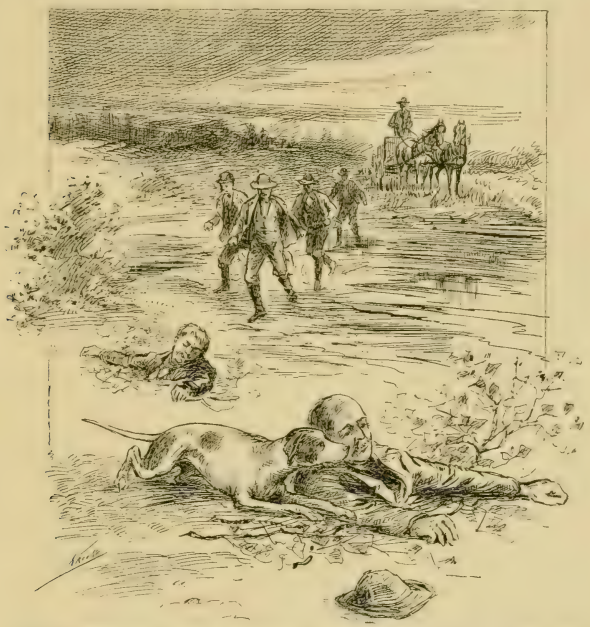
My bibulous companion had been very quiet, and I now turned my head, which was all I could turn, toward him. Incredible as it may seem he was sound asleep! The fumes of the liquor he had drank, together with his enforced quietness, had at last overcome his senses and there he was, his arms spread out on the sand, his head toppled over on one side, and actually snoring! Relieved from the sense of any immediate danger I could not repress a smile at the sonorous music that came across the quivering sand.

My thoughts now turned again to Chic. The last I had seen of her she was flying down the railroad track as though on wings. Would she get there safely? Would the three savage dogs in that farmyard near the track let her safely by? They wouldn't if they could catch her, but I knew they could not do that. There were trestles to cross. How would she get over them? It was eight miles to town. If she got there safely and delivered her message it would be at least two hours before I could expect relief. I looked at the sun; it was just about two hours high. Where had the afternoon gone? Then I thought of my dream, or vision, for it was almost as realistic as a vision, and my thoughts wandered back to the dear old homestead and the scenes of my childhood.

Slowly sank the orb of day. I had ceased to sink any deeper, and now knew that the branches would hold me safely. X— seemed to have struck hardpan (he was taller than I), for he did not go any deeper. Solemnly, and with a feeling akin to awe, I watched the sun disappear over the Western hills and wondered, with a shudder, if I would ever see it again. I was chilled through and through. There was no danger of freezing, for if the sand had been frozen we could not have sunk in it; but I began to feel the terrible exhaustion incident to such an experience and the exposure.

The twilight deepened, and I began to feel misgivings concerning the result of my message. My companion awoke and the wetting and the sleep had dissipated his mania. He was no longer a raving maniac, but he was still a pretty ugly customer. He began to growl and swear at me again. Oh, would they never come? What had happened to Chic? Surely she would not fail me now! It was terrible to think of such a death as that! My arms and legs began to fill with cramps and shooting pains. Again my head began to swim, and darkness seemed coming on with unwonted rapidity, when suddenly I was electrified by the rattle of wagon wheels! Instantly my eyes opened wide. I twisted my head and there, on the wagon road, which I could see for a long way, I saw a wagon with two horses and as many men as the wagon could hold, coming, with the horses on a run and the driver plying the whip! Close behind them were two men on horseback, and all running for dear life. I recognized the men and the horses. The man driving was a friend of mine, and beside him sat one of X—'s clerks. In front of the wagon, and still running with that long, tireless swing, was my darling Chic! On they came and dashed up to the gate that opened into the pasture. Before reaching it one of the men on horseback had cut around and, putting his horse to an extra spurt of speed, had arrived at the gate and opened it. With scarcely slack-

ened speed the wagon swung through the open gate and down across the pasture—full of little humps though it was—on the dead run! The men jumped out! One man stopped to tie the horses; all the others crawled through the fence and came on toward us, Chic leading the way. Now it was man against man.



"CHIC NESTLED DOWN CLOSE BESIDE ME AND LAID HER FACE AGAINST MY CHEEK."

Some could run faster than the others and they began to string out. There was no time for choosing ground, but on they came, following my little dog, and she came in a straight line. No hip boots had they, and no waders, but they stopped not for channels of icy water but came straight on! Noble fellows. There, one went down! He fell in the channel, but he was soon up

again, climbed out on the ice and came on again! Now the leader, whose gaunt, rugged and powerful form was easily recognized, stopped on the last towhead, about one hundred and fifty yards away, and scanned the sand anxiously.

"Hello-o-o!" he yelled. "Where are you?"

I tried to call out to let them know where we were, but my voice stuck in my throat. I could not make a sound. Then the next man behind the leader came up, and exclaimed:

"Follow the dog. Don't you see her?"

"Yes, but we may get in the sand, too."

"There's enough here to pull us out if we do," came the reply, and on they came again.

Again a mist seemed to come before my eyes. Rescue was now so near and the relief from the terrible strain was so great, that the reaction was terrible. I felt as if about to faint again when a dear, cold nose was rubbed against my face and, with a whine of content, Chic nestled down close beside me and laid her face against my cheek.

"I see one of them," I heard someone say, and then I knew no more. One of them got down on his stomach and crawled out to me, put the ropes under my arms and pulled me out. Then the same was done for X—. They asked him where the guns were, but he did not know. He had forgotten all that occurred on that terrible afternoon; or, perhaps it were better to say that he never knew. They carried me to a towhead, forced some spirits down my throat and rubbed my chilled and stiffened limbs until I came to. I told them where to get the guns and we were soon on our way home. Chic rode home with us, and one of those good-hearted fellows took off his own coat and spread it over her so that she should not catch cold.

They told me she came running up to the store and found the door shut. She then ran across the street to a man there and jumped about him and whined to attract his attention. He tried to take the note from her,

but she sprang away and ran back to the store where she stood and looked so wistfully at him that he must have been dull, indeed, if he had not known what she wanted. He went across and opened the door for her. M—, X—'s head clerk, was seated at a desk and Chic ran up, jumped up and put her paws on the desk and fairly thrust the note into his face. He read it and in an instant all was confusion. He rushed out of the door and yelled in such a manner that in less time than it takes to tell it there were two or three men running up to him. A light wagon stood in front of a blacksmith's shop and a team belonging to a banker stood near by, hitched to a buggy. It was but the work of a moment to unhitch the horses from the buggy and hitch them to the wagon. A hardware store had in the meantime been raided for ropes and they were ready to start.

All this time Chic had been very impatient, and when they were ready to start M— said: "Go on, Chic!" and away she went at the top of her speed. They had to put the horses into a run to keep up with her, but, of course, would have done so anyway. There was nothing too good for Chic after that, and there was no one to sneer at her fancy training.

A few days' good care brought me around all right. As for Chic—she could have worn diamonds, but the foolish little thing preferred beefsteak.

It is not without a feeling akin to regret that I bring these lines to a close. Through many a long Winter evening they have beguiled the time away. I have, in them, lived over again some of my most enjoyable hunts, renewed acquaintances and friendships with jovial companions, again felt the blood tingle with the excitement of the chase, again felt the thrill of triumph, the sting of defeat. Chic has helped me write them, for she has been with me. As I think them over it seems to me that the bird that gives me greatest pleasure to outwit and bring to bag is the wily, swift and

cunning Canada goose, but Chic does not agree with me.

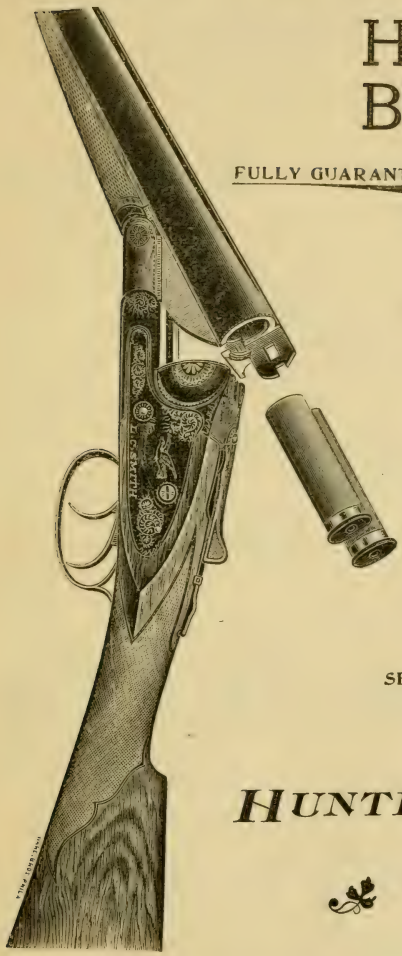
Even now she leaves her place on the rug and comes and lays her dear head on my knee. As I stroke her she looks up at me, her eyes full of love and intelligence, and wags her tail energetically.

"What is it, puppy?" I ask.

"Come," she replies, "let's go out and get a quail."

THE END.

L. C. Smith Guns



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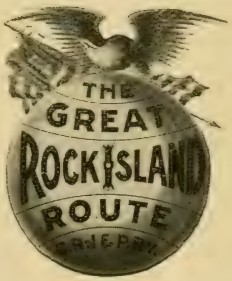

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