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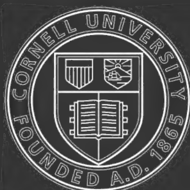

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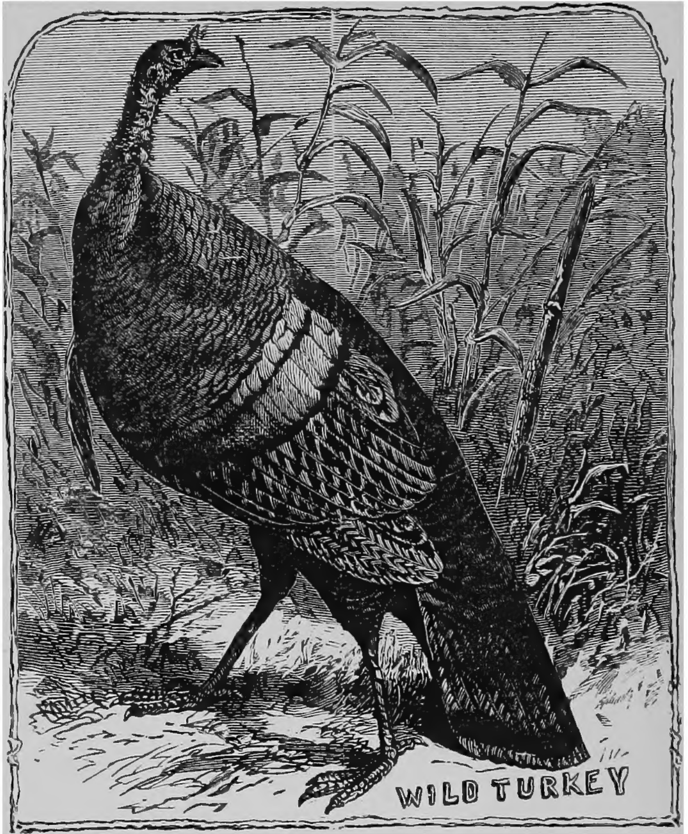

(*Frontispiece.*)

AMERICAN

GAME BIRD SHOOTING.

BY

JOHN MORTIMER MURPHY.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

This work has been written for the purpose of giving a concise description of the Game Birds of Canada and the United States, their haunts and habits, and the methods of shooting and capturing them practised in various parts of the Continent. I have also endeavored to show how the birds act when pursued by man, to give an idea of what field sports are in different sections of the country, and to sketch some of the types of sportsmen which one frequently meets on the borders of civilization. Having no sympathy with those who slaughter birds indiscriminately for the sake of boasting of heavy bags, I have kept the pot-hunting element of sport as far in the background as possible; and as I do not consider that men armed with modern weapons, and assisted by highly trained dogs, have much to vaunt about even when they make unusually big bags, I have given more prominence to human incidents in the field than to the mere shooting of birds, which is largely a mechanical act. Field sports ought to be with gentlemen a means to an end, that end being the development of faculties which are useful in every sphere of life, the cultivation of generous traits of character, and the retention or recovery of health through exercise, fresh air, and abstention for a time from harassing duties. The pleasant excitement and change of scene incident to field sports, and the opportunities they afford for communing with Nature in all her moods, make them a panacea for many of the ills which afflict men of sedentary occupations. If this work induces some of them to devote more attention to the "virile amusements of gentlemen," I shall feel that it has accomplished some useful purpose, provided they do not destroy life wantonly, nor forget that

> "He prayeth well, who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast."

AMERICAN GAME BIRD SHOOTING.

CHAPTER I.

THE WILD TURKEY.

The Turkey—Its early history—Different species—The Mexican turkey—Size, weight, and color, of the American species—Opening of the love season—How the males woo—Severe combats—Characteristics of barren hens—Bachelor parties—Nests—Calling for mates—Vigilant mothers—The young broods—Haunts of the birds—Migratory tours—Jealousy of the males—How flocks cross a river—Franklin's opinion of the turkey—Its habits—Calling turkeys—Various kinds of callers—Methods of shooting turkeys—Capturing them alive—Pens—Baiting the grounds—Taming wild turkeys—Change produced by domestication—Blinds—How to find a turkey roost—The use of dogs—The best months for shooting—The brands of shot used—The secret of successful shooting—Wholesale slaughter—Turkey hunters—A colored sportsman—How to build a blind—An "enchanted gobbler," and the manner in which he was bagged—Deceiving a human caller—A turkey dog—A bet and its result—A day's shooting—Turkeys in the Indian Territory—I kill seven in Southern Colorado—A forest feast—How to cook turkeys—June gobblers.

The wild turkey is, undoubtedly, the finest game-bird on the American Continent, and possesses many of those qualities which are so much appreciated by lovers of the gun, for it is difficult to find any feathered creature that can excel it in cautiousness, vigilance, acuteness of vision and hearing, and foresight, and when to these are added fleetness of foot and strength of wing, it is easy to understand why old hunters say that "it is harder to kill a turkey than a deer."

The early history of this bird is interesting to those who care to note what great vitality a fallacy has, and how easy it is to err unwittingly. Thus, Belon and Gesner assumed that the turkey was the *Meleagris* of the ancients, whereas the bird known by that name was the Guinea fowl (*Numidæ Meleagris*), which was quite common in Turkey, Egypt, and other Oriental countries.

Linnæus, keen observer and naturalist as he was, adopted the technical nomenclature of a preceding naturalist, and gave the turkey the name by which it is known to science, namely, *Meleagris gallopavo*, although he knew very well whence it came, and mentions the fact in his work, for he places the habitat of the *Gallopavo sylvestris* of Ray in New England.

Brisson was the first person to disentangle the history of the turkey and the Guinea fowl, for he gave an elaborate description, many synonyms, and a figure of each, and thus proved that the *Meleagris* mentioned by Aristotle, Athanæus, Pliny, and other authors could not be the gobbling native of the New World.

The source from which the turkey came to Europe was also a matter of dispute for some years. All the early ornithologists, such as Ray, Willughby, Gesner, Belon, Barrington, and Aldrovandi thought it had been imported from Asia, and their statements were accepted as facts until Buffon gave a lucid history of its migrations.

Its English name is derived from the idea that it originally came from the Turkish dominions, so that it has been one of the most misunderstood members of the feathered creation, so far as its name and origin are concerned. The supposition that it came from Turkey was probably based on the fact that Guinea fowls were imported into England from the Levant in the sixteenth century, and the turkey having found its way into the country about the same time, the general public assumed that both came from the same place.

Barnaby Googe, a writer on husbandry, says, in 1614, that "those outlandish birds called ginny cocks and turkey cocks," were not known in England previous to the year 1530, but he, evidently, derived his statement from the German author Heresbach, who was one of the prominent writers on the history and habits of the bird.

The earliest European mention of the turkey was made by Oviedo in his summary of the history of the West Indies, which was written in 1525, for the Emperor Charles V, of Spain. In his time the domestic bird was very common in the West Indies, as well as on the mainland, it having been introduced into the islands by the Spaniards, who found it abundant in Mexico, when that country was discovered by Grijalvo, in 1518. Daines Barrington, in his essay "Whether the turkey was known before the discovery of America," assumed that it was not known in Mexico, but acknowledged that it was a resident of Virginia when that region was first explored by the whites. In contradistinction to his statement, however, we learn that Montezuma had one of the finest zoölogical gardens in the world, long before the Spaniards visited his country, and that the wild beasts were fed daily with turkeys—a proof that they must have been very abundant.

Oviedo calls those found in the West Indies, peacocks; but that they were not peacocks is evident from a part of his description of them which is given in Purchas's "Pilgrims," for this author says: "The neck is bare of feathers, but covered with a skin, which they change after their phantasie into divers colors. They have a horn, as it were, in front, and haires on their breast."

Rèné de Laudonniére, the protegè of Admiral Coligny, found them numerous in South Carolina, in 1564, but the domestic species had found their way into Spain several years before that time. They are supposed to have reached England between the years 1524 and 1541, for,

according to the old doggerel which is assigned to the period of Henry VIII:

> "Turkies, carps, hoppes, piccarel and beere,
> Came into England in one year."

The poet who wrote these lines was wrong so far as the carp is concerned, for that is mentioned in the Book of St. Albans, but the turkey is not even referred to in the feast given by Archbishop Nevills to Edward IV, nor in the Earl of Northumberland's Household Book, which dates as late as 1512. After the bird was introduced into Great Britain, it must have increased rapidly, as Barrington says, that turkey chickens, or powts, formed a portion of a Sergeant's feast in 1555; and Tusser, in his "Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandrie," places them among the Christmas fare of farmers, in 1585; for, in describing a dinner, he says:

> "Beefe, mutton, and porke, shred pies of the best,
> Pig, veale, goose and capon, and turkie well drest,
> Cheese, apples, and nuts, jolie carols to heare,
> As then in the countrie is counted good cheare."

According to Blumenbach, the bird was introduced into Germany six years after it appeared in England, but the first heard of it in France was at the marriage feast of Charles IX, in 1570.

The domestic turkey was, for a long time, supposed to be descended from the wild species found in the eastern portion of the United States; but Gould, in a paper read before the London Zoölogical Society in 1856, proved that its progenitors belonged to the Mexican variety, which differs in some details from its more northern congener. The latter may be readily identified by the tips of the tail feathers and the upper tail-coverts, which are of a chestnut-brown color, whereas these parts are tipped with white in the former. The Mexican variety is also a little more brilliant in coloring, and the gloss is more greenish. When the tail and tail-coverts of a turkey are black,

or any shade of white or light fulvous, one may be sure it is the farm-yard species, but if they are chestnut-brown, it is the common wild bird of the United States. A strong reason for asserting that the domestic turkey is descended from the variety found in Mexico and the South-western States is, that the flesh of both is dry and sweet, of a darkish hue on the back and legs, and white on the breast and wings, whereas, it is darkish throughout in the more northern and eastern bird.

The farm-yard species is sometimes very much like its progenitors, the main difference between them being in the greater development of the fatty lobes of the head and neck of the former. The changes in color produced by domestication are, of course, well known, for some of the tame turkeys are totally black, while others have developed a tuft on the head, but these variations in hue do not disprove the theory about the source whence they sprung. The Mexican variety is found in portions of Western Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and the regions adjoining them on the south. According to Prof. Sartorius, it is very shy, lives in families like wild geese, and is so vigilant that sentinels are kept on watch when flocks are feeding. It is so fleet of foot that some dogs cannot overtake it; and it rarely flies to trees except when it is very hard pressed, as it depends mainly on running for escaping its foes. He thinks it does not trail its wings as much as its congeners do, as some captured by him did not have the ends of these appendages worn away by scraping them against the ground.

During the breeding season, which commences in March or April, each hen lays from three to twelve brownish-red, spotted eggs. The hatching takes thirty days, and during that time the birds rarely leave their nests, except when they go in search of food, and then they cover them with leaves or grass to protect them from predaceous animals.

The wild turkey of the northern and eastern division

of the United States was formerly abundant in the region lying between the Atlantic Ocean and the Rocky Mountains, but it is now mainly confined to the Western and Southwestern States and Territories, though it is still rather common in some of the more densely populated States, but its habitat is confined to forests, cane brakes, or the vicinity of swamps where acorns, hazel nuts, and other mast are found.

It is a much handsomer bird than its domestic congener, and has all the fire and spirit which distinguish creatures in a state of nature from those of the farmyard. The gobbler is a perfect specimen of pomposity, and, evidently, considers himself the emblem of stateliness. The female differs from him in several points, so that it is an easy matter to recognize her. She is, primarily, much smaller, less brilliant in plumage, devoid of spurs, and, generally, of bristles on the breast, and the flesh process above the base of the bill is less developed. An adult male measures from forty-six to fifty inches in length, about twenty-five inches in height, and weighs between sixteen and thirty-five pounds, the average weight being twenty pounds. The female varies in weight from eight to eighteen or more pounds, the average being twelve pounds.

The largest gobbler I ever heard of was said to turn the scales at forty pounds, but that weight is phenomenal even in Florida or Texas, which are considered the home of the giants of the *Maleagris gallopavo.* I may add here parenthetically that an old hunter told me that the Mexican variety (*M. Mexicana*) attained an unusual size along the banks of the Rio Grande, in Texas.

The head of the turkey is remarkable for its small size, compared with that of the body, but what it lacks in quantity it atones for in quality, for few of the feathered creation can equal the bird in those characteristics necessary to protect it from foes or to enable it to secure food.

It is, in fact, unusually intelligent, and as pugnacious as it is conceited. Its form is a combination of strength and gracefulness; and even the peculiar appendages on its head and breast are pleasant to look at when they are properly displayed.

The bill is short and robust, and about two inches and a half in length; the superior mandible is vaulted, overhangs the inferior, and is covered at the base by a naked cere-like membrane, in which the nostrils are situated. The aperture of the ear is defended by a fascicle of small feathers; the irides are dark-brown; the head and half the neck are covered with a naked bluish skin, on which are a number of purplish-red excrescences. A fleshy, extensible caruncle, which is hairy and pencillated at the tip, arises at the conjunction of the bill and forehead. When the bird is quiescent, this is not more than an inch and a half in length; but when excited by love or rage, it becomes so elongated as to fall two or three inches below the bill.

The neck, which is of moderate thickness, has a pendent fascicle of black, rigid hairs, which vary from nine to twelve inches in length, on its inferior portion. The tarsus, which is red, is about six inches long, and the feet are very robust. The general hue of the plumage is glossy coppery-bronze, merging into green and purple in some lights. This gives the bird a most brilliant appearance, especially in the spring, when all the feathers are in their best condition.

The males commence wooing as early as February in some of the extreme Southern States, but March is the opening of the love season throughout the country, and April the month in which it reaches its highest development. The males may then be heard calling to the females from every direction, until the woods ring with their loud and liquid cries, which are commenced long ere the sun appears above the horizon, and continued for

hours with the steadiest persistency. As both sexes roost apart at this period, the hens avoid answering the gobblers for some time, but they finally become less obdurate, and coyly return the call. When the males hear this, all within hearing respond to it promptly and vehemently, uttering notes similar to those which the domestic gobblers do when they hear an unusual sound.

If the female answering the call is on the ground, the males fly to her and parade before her with all the pompous strutting that characterizes the family. They spread and erect their tails, depress their wings with a quivering motion and trail them along the ground, and draw the head back on the shoulders, as if to increase their dignity and importance; then wheel, and march, and swell, and gobble, as if they were trying to outdo each other in airs and graces. The female, however, pays little attention to these ceremonious parades, and demurely looks on while the rivals for her affection try to outdo one another in playing the gallant and dandy.

When the strutting and gobbling fail to win her, the candidates for matrimony challenge each other to mortal combat, and whichever is successful in the contest walks away with her in a most nonchalant manner. The easy indifference of the hen as to which she will follow may not be pleasing to persons imbued with romantic feelings, yet she is only obeying a wise law of nature, which decrees that only the fittest should live, and in the lower animal world these are characterized by their physical qualities.

The battles between the males are often waged with such desperate valor that more than one combatant is sent to join the great majority, as they deliver very hard blows at each other's heads, and do not give up a contest until they are dead, or so exhausted as to be scarcely able to move. When one has killed another, it is said to caress the dead bird in an apparently affectionate manner, as if

it were very sorry to have been compelled to do such a deed, but could not help it, owing to the force of circumstances; yet I have seen the winner of a tournament in such a rage that it not only killed its rival, but pecked out its eyes after it was dead.

When the victors have won their brides, they keep together until the latter commence laying, and then separate, for the males are so jealous that they would destroy the eggs if they could, in order to prolong the love period, and the hens, knowing this, carefully shun them. The males are often followed by more than one hen, but they are not so polygamous as their domestic congeners, as I never heard of a gobbler having more than two or three females under his protection.

The adult gobblers drive the young males away during the erotic season, and will not even permit them to gobble if they can, so that the latter are obliged to keep by themselves, generally in parties of from six to ten, unless some of the veterans are killed, and then they occupy the vacated places of the bridegrooms, according to the order of their prowess.

Some aged males may also be found wandering through the woods in parties of two, three, four, or five, but they seldom mingle with the flocks, owing, apparently, to the waning of their salacious disposition. They are exceedingly shy and vigilant, and so wild that they fly immediately from an imaginary danger created by their own suspicious nature. They strut and gobble occasionally, but not near so much as their younger kindred. Barren hens, which also keep by themselves, are almost as demonstrative in displaying their vocal powers, airs, and feathers as the old males, whereas they are exceedingly coy and unpretentious when fertile.

This fact would seem to prove that ordinary animal nature is changed by circumstances. When the love season is over, the males are very much emaciated, so,

when the hens leave them, they keep by themselves until they recover their strength, and then reunite in small bachelor parties; but instead of being exceedingly clamorous, as they were in the early part of the mating period, they become almost silent. Yet they sometimes strut and gobble on their roosts, though, as a general rule, they do not, and content themselves with elevating and lowering the tail feathers, and uttering a puffing sound. They keep at this exercise for hours at a time on moonlight nights, without rising from their perch, and sometimes continue it until daylight.

When the hen is ready to lay, she scratches out a slight hollow in a thicket, a cane brake, beside a prostrate tree, in tall grass or weeds, or a grain field, lines it rudely with grass or leaves, and then deposits her eggs in it. These, which vary in number from ten to twenty, are smaller and more elongated than those of the domestic turkey, and are of a dull cream or a dirty-white color, sprinkled with brownish-red spots.

Audubon says that several hens may lay their eggs in one nest, and hatch and raise the broods together. He found three hens sitting on forty-two eggs in a single nest, and one was always present to protect them.

If the eggs are not destroyed, only one brood is raised in a year; but if they are, the female calls loudly for a male, and when she is rejoined by one, both keep company until she is ready to commence laying again, when she deserts him or drives him away, as he has the very strongest penchant for destroying the eggs, in order to keep her in his company. This forces her to build her nest in the most secluded spot she can find, and to cover it carefully with leaves or grass whenever she leaves it in search of food.

She seldom moves far from it, and is so faithful to her trust that she will allow her deadliest foes to approach her to within a few paces before she manifests any sign

of being disturbed. When the eggs are about to be hatched she rarely leaves them even for a short time, and will often permit herself to be captured rather than desert them. When the young are ready to appear, at the end of thirty days, she assists them in breaking their fragile prisons, and when they emerge she caresses them, dries them with her bill, and in the course of a couple of days helps them to totter out of the nest.

As soon as they are able to move about she leads them in search of food, and exercises the greatest discretion in finding it for them, while she is equally zealous in protecting them from their numerous foes. The sight of a hawk causes her to give a prompt note of alarm, and on hearing this they scatter and hide in the long grass or under leaves, and remain concealed until the danger is over. Their color, which is a light-brown, with dark-brown markings on the head and back, is a most valuable means of guarding them from enemies, as it harmonizes so well with the hue of their surroundings that they cannot be readily seen. The mother is also very careful to keep them away from swampy places, as a wetting is most fatal to them. When they are about two or three weeks old they are able to fly well enough to seek refuge in trees at night, but they generally roost on the lower limbs. Being diligent seekers after food, they quit their perches with the first gleam of dawn and hie to the woods or fields in search of it. They are very fond of berries and insects, but as they increase in size they become omnivorous, and seem to equally relish grain, grass, grapes, beetles, lizards, tadpoles, pecan nuts, fruit, acorns, hickory nuts, and other mast. They may, as a general rule, be found seeking for pabulum in the newly cut stubble-fields each morning and evening, but during the heat of the day they prefer places where they can dust themselves, in order to destroy the wood-ticks which find a congenial home in their flesh. Sandy hillocks, much-travelled

roads, and places where logs have been burned are favorite dusting-grounds, and are such objects of interest that flocks will travel a long distance for the purpose of revelling in dirt baths. Their presence may be readily noted in the forest by the manner in which the leaves are turned over and the earth scratched about, but as they work quite a large tract of country in a short time, a person may have to walk several miles before he meets them, especially if foxes and raccoons are any way abundant.

The powts change their coat of dirty-gray to one of blackish-bronze about the middle of October, and from that time forth they are considered fit to be shot and to furnish legitimate sport. All their faculties seem to be fully developed then, and being fleet of foot and strong of wing, and in the highest possible condition for the table, they are deemed worthy the attention of the most gifted sportsman and the daintiest epicure.

When food becomes scarce in a region, the turkeys form into flocks, numbering from ten to a hundred, and commence a migratory tour in search of it. The adult males keep by themselves, while the mothers lead their broods, either alone or in company with other families, for the gobblers are so jealous of the young that they would kill them if they got the opportunity; hence the necessity of keeping them apart.

As the flocks move onward they are gradually joined by others, until each drove numbers fifty and upwards, and these remain together until they are dispersed by foes or they voluntarily separate. Should they meet a broad river during their migration, all ages and sexes are said to make a stay of one or two days on its bank, preparatory to crossing. This time is not idly wasted, however, as they devote it to strutting, running round one another, expanding the tail feathers, gobbling vociferously, or making the loud puffing or purring noise for which they are famous.

All this clamor and parading is supposed to be for the purpose of screwing their courage up to the highest sticking-point, and of cheering each other to undertake the passage across the treacherous water.

When their bravery has been raised to the utmost possible pitch, they mount on the trees, and, at a signal from their leader, launch themselves into the air and fly for the opposite shore. If the river is wide, some of them fall into it, but on touching it they spread the tail in the form of a fan, bring the wings close to the body, and, plying their strong legs in the most vigorous manner, swim rapidly for the land.

If the bank is not very steep they may be able to surmount it, but if it is many of them are drowned, as their efforts in the water exhaust them in a short time. The first to succumb are the weakest of the young broods, and then the decrepit veterans, whose vehement gobbling proves that they are better vocalists than athletes, and that they have more courage than discretion.

When the birds cross a river of any magnitude they become so bewildered that they fall an easy prey to sportsmen and predaceous animals, for they seem to lose all their natural caution and cunning. If they find food abundant in their new quarters they separate into small droves, which are composed of all ages and sexes, and remain together until the following spring, when they disperse, preparatory to mating.

They become so daring as to enter a farm-yard sometimes, and to indulge in contests with their domesticated congeners, if the latter do not acknowledge their physical supremacy. Yet they often get along amicably together, and even "take each other for better or worse" in the pairing period, but, as a rule, the wild birds prefer to confine their conjugal relations to themselves.

The combativeness of a domestic gobbler and his hatred of red and crimson colors are well known; yet

he is by no means as quarrelsome as his feral congener, the latter being one of the most pugnacious of creatures.

It was probably on this account that Benjamin Franklin considered that the turkey, and not the eagle, ought to have been selected as the emblem of the United States, for, besides being a true native of America, he considered that it was also a more useful animal than the monarch of the air, and, though somewhat vain and silly, that it had the courage to face a grenadier of the British Guards if he entered the farm-yard with a red coat on his back. The wild bird would not, however, attack a child who displayed that disagreeable hue, as it is too much afraid of enemies to attack anything having the semblance of mankind. It is so wary that it is very difficult of approach in the daytime, but, by watching its movements, it may be caught on its perch on moonlight nights. It generally roosts high up on the trees, and, if the flocks are together, a dozen or two may be found on one tree. Like all the gallinaceous birds of the American Continent, it fancies itself secure when once it gets amidst the foliage, and may remain on its perch even when its deadliest foe is walking beneath. It is said that a flock can be killed on a roost, if the lower ones are shot first, but I have never seen this done, though I have seen five bagged before the remainder decided to seek safety in flight.

Notwithstanding the extreme cautiousness and vigilance of these birds, many are shot annually by men who know their habits. The favorite method with experienced hunters is to lie in ambush and call the males towards them by imitating the notes of the female. This is done with the mouth, or by making a call out of the small bone of a turkey's wing, or out of brass or wood. The number who can call well with the vocal organs alone is small indeed, as it requires long practice and a close study of the various intonations of the hens to imitate them, yet I have known men who could cluck,

drum, yelp, and gobble so accurately that they would deceive the oldest veteran in the forest and bring him within range of their rifle or shot-gun at the proper season. The caller made out of the wing-bone of a turkey is probably one of the simplest and best that can be obtained, as all a person has to do is to put one end into his mouth and draw the air through it, and if he knows his business he can imitate the notes of the female.

Some men make a caller by sawing off about two inches of the end of a cow's horn, and cutting a piece of shingle so that it will fit the small end of the piece sawed off. By boring a hole in the middle of the shingle, and inserting in it a piece of wood about the thickness of a large nail and long enough to project a short distance beyond the open end of the horn, and scraping this stick on a piece of slate, the familiar "keouk" of the hen can be imitated.

A very good caller is made out of a tapering cylinder of hard-wood, about six inches long, an inch in diameter at the bottom, half an inch at the top, and hollowed in such a manner that it will correspond with the outside shape. By inserting in this a small piece of cane, about seven or eight inches long, and having a very fine opening through it, nearly every note of the turkey, except the gobble, may be produced. One made out of the large wing-bone of the turkey, that nearest the body, is very popular with some hunters, as it is portable and easily prepared. This is made by cutting a crescent-like opening in one end of the bone; the small end is then cut off; the bone is cleaned out; a nicely fitting plug of wood, with a small hole in it, is inserted into the piece cut off; and into this wood a piece of cane, having a fine opening running through it, is fitted as in the wooden caller.

Still another is made out of a piece of cedar about two inches long, one and a half inches wide, and one-fourth of an inch in thickness. This is hollowed out to within

a quarter of an inch of the bottom, and cut as thin as possible. By taking both ends between the thumb and fingers, and rubbing it crosswise on the barrels of the gun or the butt plate, the call notes of the hen can be produced after a little practice. One that imitates the "yelp" of a turkey very well, is made of a piece of wood about three inches long, two inches wide, and hollowed out until it is quite thin. By inserting a nail or a piece of wire in the bottom of this simple apparatus, and drawing it across a slate, an erotic gobbler may be coaxed within range; but, to be successful, the hand must carefully cover the hole, in order to produce the intonation which is so deceptive and alluring. Some persons prefer to all these a piece of thin rubber—that known to dentists as rubber dam—about three inches long and an inch wide. By turning down one edge, and partially articulating the notes into it, the yelps and calls can be fairly imitated. Even with all these devices, and a perfect mastery of the cries of the turkey, one may sit and call for hours without receiving a response from the wary birds, and if he does, they may not so much as deign to approach him. The novice who has not mastered the notes of the turkey would be more liable to scare away every gobbler in the forest with these calls than to bring him within shooting distance; to bag one, he must, therefore, resort to some other tactics besides calling; but as these are varied enough, he need not return empty-handed from a disrict in which the birds are plentiful.

The general methods employed in bagging them are, to stalk them; to shoot them on their perches during moonlight nights; to wait for them in ambush behind a baited blind; to work them up over trained dogs and bring them down when they are on the wing; to follow them to their roosts; and to track them on the snow. The latter is perhaps the most unsportsmanlike system, as they cannot easily be induced to leave their roosts if

they think the snow is too soft and deep to prevent travelling; and they are so fond of shelter that they may remain without food for several days rather than face the wintry blasts. They are frequently caught alive in rude pens, made of logs or fence rails, but only in places where they are somewhat abundant. The first thing to be done in such cases, is to find the haunt of a flock and scatter grain over it, by putting small quantities in different places, and marking these spots for future use. If this grain is eaten, the trapper rebaits the ground, as his purpose is to induce them to come there regularly in search of food.

When they have been persuaded to do this, he digs a trench five or six feet long, two feet deep, and about the same width, with the sides sloping gradually from the edge to the bottom. An old rail is placed across the middle of this trench, and others across that until they form a rectangle which encloses an area of two or three hundred square feet. A roof of rails or logs is next placed on it, and the trap is complete. The trench is then sprinkled over with grass and dead leaves, to take away its appearance of freshness, for turkeys carefully avoid any spot that has an unfamiliar aspect, as they consider it dangerous to their physical welfare. The trench and trap are then baited, and a trail of grain is carried in various directions, in order to lure wanderers towards them from every quarter. When the birds commence eating the grain they become so anxious and heedless that they may not lift their heads until they find themselves inside the pen. Having devoured the generous store usually deposited there, they look around for some means of escape, but in vain, for nothing meets their vision except solid wood, which no amount of flying on their part can shake down. Finding their efforts ineffectual, they commence marching round and round in hopes of being able to obtain an opening that may lead them to freedom,

yet they never think of looking down, and retreating through the trench by which they entered, although they jump over it every few moments during their ceaseless procession.

This want of thoughtfulness on their part proves fatal to them, for they are kept in prison until the trapper arrives and wrings their necks, or takes them home alive, to see if they are susceptible of domestication. If captured young, it does not require much time to make them as tame as the ordinary farm-yard variety.

Audubon says that these "semi-civilized" turkeys will not roost with their domestic congeners;" and Bachman states that if they are kept away from the latter, and bred among themselves, in confinement, the third generation will lose their brilliancy of plumage and assume a pale-brown color, with an occasional white feather. Although turkeys are killed in various ways, shooting them from baited blinds is the favorite method with some persons. The blinds are made of leaves and bushes, and are generally crude affairs, as all that is required is a shelter sufficiently dense to conceal the movements of the hunter. When one of these is built, a trail of grain is carried from it into the haunts of the birds, and while they are eating the food that is to lead them to death, the sportsman sits or stands almost as motionless as a statue behind his improvised screen, waits until several of them get their heads in a line within range, and then blazes away at them. If he uses more than one gun he may bag half a dozen, but he is also likely to claim only one or two, as they can stand a large amount of lead.

The negroes of the South frequently have a baited trench before their blinds, and when once the birds get into this pit of destruction few escape, for the black hunters load their guns nearly to the muzzle, and when they fire they cut a clean swath through the ranks of their feathered visitors. As this is not considered legitimate sport by

Southern gentlemen, the colored brethren strenuously deny that they ever shot a bird in such a nefarious manner. Calling turkeys to a blind is considered fair and honorable by all lovers of the gun, as the chances of bringing a veteran gobbler within range are problematical, unless a person is well versed in that vocal art. The best time for calling is the early morning during the pairing period, or the autumn, when the birds are in prime condition, but no true sportsman kills the hens during the spring and summer. The roosts of a flock of turkeys may be readily discovered on a moonlight night, by imitating the cry of the barred owl, as every male within hearing of that disagreeable sound responds to it in the most vehement manner, and thus reveals his position to the deceiving hunter, who soon makes preparations to pepper him with shot. It is rather difficult to shoot turkeys over dogs, as they rarely lie to a point, for the moment they see their canine foe they run away or seek safety in a tree; hence, a dog ought to be trained specially for their pursuit, and his first principle of education should be to point on winding them, for they will will not stand close drawing, and to bark when they are flushed. They are naturally so vigilant and suspicious that the slightest movement or the least noise, even if it is only the breaking of a rotten twig, will flush them or cause them to hide in the densest thickets and canebrakes, and even to leave a region for good.

If they are shot on the wing, a person is not always sure of getting them, for they may go half a mile or more after being mortally wounded, and when they alight they try to conceal themselves in the heaviest cover if they cannot keep their foothold on a tree; but as they fly in a direct line, they may be secured with the aid of a dog which knows how to use its eyes as well as its nose.

The best months for shooting them in a sportsmanlike manner are October, November, December, and January,

as they are then in the highest condition, both physically and mentally; and the best guns for bagging them are those having a full choke, for both velocity and penetration are required to bring them promptly down. The most effective shot to use are No. 1, B, BB, or BBB, as either of these brands can stop a gobbler at a distance of fifty or sixty yards. Some persons prefer buckshot, however, whilst others consider a rifle-ball the only sure missile, so that in this, as in other matters of sport, people of various experiences differ in their opinions.

If a rifle is used, aim should always be taken at the body; but the head and neck are the safest parts to fire at with a shot-gun, if the bird is any distance away, for a shot in the side is more likely to wound than to kill; yet, I have known more than one struck in that part with No. 6 to give up the ghost without much effort.

The main secret in being a successful turkey-hunter is to learn the haunts and habits of the bird; to be light of foot, keen of eye, and persevering in pursuit; and, above all, to be a good caller. Correctness of intonation is not everything, however, for a man must learn the expression and meaning of every note, and be coy or bold, persistent or silent, according to the mood displayed by the creatures he desires to bag. If a person calls too much, he may bring the most resolute and daring members of the flock within range before the remainder can come up, and if he does not shoot them then they may detect his deceptive character, and not only flee from him themselves, but take all their companions with them, and if he does fire, he is almost sure of scaring away those that have not come up. Persons who desire to make a big bag with one volley, call cautiously on this account, as they want to bring the whole flock within range together, and mow them down when they get several heads in a line. This saves time and trouble, and may be legitimate enough, but whether it is in ac-

cordance with the ethics and æsthetics of true sport is another matter.

If a man wanted the birds for food, no one could object to this system of destruction, as the old adage, "necessity has no laws," would be applicable in his case; but if he did not want them particularly, this idea of calling a flock at a time within gun-shot would be open to criticism. The veriest tyro can bag gobblers in regions where they are little hunted, for the necessity of cautiousness and vigilance has not been forced upon them by stern lessons; hence, they allow their human foe to approach close enough to deal destruction among them before they learn to know that he represents death to them.

The turkey is quite common in Florida, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Arkansas, the Indian Territory, Louisiana, and some of the contiguous regions, and its pursuit is a favorite pastime in winter with those who like a life in the wilderness, and prefer its virile amusements to the gentler, though more exacting, pleasures of a city. People who have pursued and bagged their twenty-pound gobblers, whether by calling, stalking, or any other method known to the initiated, consider themselves "no small apples," when compared to those who have not; and veteran turkey-hunters think all other kinds of bird-shooting quite tame, if not insignificant, in comparison with their favorite sport.

There is scarcely one of these men who cannot tell a tale about some unusually keen-witted turkey which he could not kill, or which cost him so much time and trouble to bag that it proved an exceedingly costly trophy; but the question of labor and expense is a very minor one with all of them when contrasted with their sense of satisfaction at their final success. I have had several opportunities of judging what an astute gobbler is capable of doing so far as escaping his foes is con-

cerned, and these have taught me to respect his mental and physical qualities, and to sympathize with those who capture him after many trials and tribulations. I remember what difficulty an old settler and myself had one morning to bag a gobbler which was said to be "so cute," owing to the number of times he had been fired at, that he knew the "call" of every man in the district who owned a gun. It was even intimated that he knew how near he could approach them without getting hit, and that his usual trick was to draw their fire and then stand and laugh at them until he was ready to drop from exhaustion. My informant went so far as to say that this celebrated gobbler respected good marksmen, and only smiled or laughed at them when they missed, but that he fairly hated the poor shots, and hooted them in the most contemptuous manner.

"Better look out for yourself!" he exclaimed, "or he may give you a dose of hissing."

"And what about yourself?" I asked.

"Oh! I'm used to it," was the answer; "I don't care much for his hissing now."

"All right; then I'll steel myself against his derision also, by bagging him as soon as he comes near enough," I replied, confidently.

"Well, you needn't fret about that, for unless he has become mighty polite of late, he won't come near enough to bite you, anyway."

I expressed my pleasure at this feeling of consideration on his part, as we started for the haunt of the cynical bird, about three o'clock, one delightful morning in March. This haunt being in the sunny South, the light breeze that stole through the vale was laden with the fragrance of many flowers, while the air resounded with the droning hum of bees and insects, and the song of the early-rising birds. We marched about three

miles from my companion's house, and entered a charmingly romantic piece of woods, in which the orange, palmetto, and magnolia trees were intermingled with the gloomy pine and the graceful, feathery cedar. Brilliant vines or long festoons of funereal moss draped each forest giant, while gaudy flowers and rich-hued shrubbery formed parterres in every direction. Our walk disturbed numerous paroquets and humming-birds, which went flitting through the trees like so many rays of rich, bright colors, and roused the crane and heron—whose whooping cries resounded throughout the silent woods—and sent them sailing high into the air.

The scene was so enchanting to me that I did not care if I never met a turkey there, for it seemed out of place to kill any creature in such a lovely locality. Even my companion, who had turkey on the brain that morning, relapsed into silence when we entered the forest, and evidently drank in its beauties anew, much as he was used to them. He did not lose sight of the object of our journey, however, for he carefully scanned the ground at intervals in search of "signs," and peered earnestly into trees to see if he could not rest his longing eyes on a plump gobbler. He was unsuccessful in detecting either signs or birds, and this caused him to indulge in a few expletives at turkeys in general, and at our ill-luck in particular. While passing through a dense piece of undergrowth, where we could not see thirty paces ahead, we were startled by hearing the heavy tread of some animal on the dead leaves, and the rapid crashing of branchlets. This unexpected sound caused us to look at each other in silence for a moment or two, as if to inquire, What can produce that noise? I was the first to find the use of my tongue, and I asked him—because I supposed he ought to know everything about the neighborhood—

"What is that?"

"A thundering big grizzly or a behemoth, I reckon," was the answer.

"Is your gun loaded?" I inquired.

"No."

"Is yours?"

"No."

"Then get behind this tree and load, and if it pitches into us we must fight."

I obeyed his suggestion with a promptitude I was rarely guilty of, and both secreted ourselves behind a huge live-oak. As the footsteps were approaching rapidly, we began to load our guns with small shot in violent haste, but before we had finished the operation, a sturdy, ragged negro, who was laden with three turkeys, emerged, not ten feet away from us. When my companion saw him he indulged in a vigorous expletive, while I laughed heartily at our needless scare. The Fifteenth Amendment was evidently as frightened as ourselves, for, on seeing us, he stopped abruptly and stared at us for a few moments in stupefied amazement; but when we advanced towards him his distended eyeballs ceased rolling, and a broad grin overspread his features as he exclaimed:

"Loh, gemmen, how you did skeer me," and he chuckled deeply, as if it were the funniest of jokes.

My companion, who was not of so amiable a disposition as the colored voter, asked abruptly:

"Where did you kill those turkeys?"

"Down dere in de bottoms," was the answer.

"Did you kill them in a trap?"

"Loh, no, massa; I shot 'em wid dis gun," and he held up an old weapon that looked as if it were more dangerous to the carrier than to the birds.

"I tell you what it is, boss," he continued; "I had the powerfullest time you eber seed in calling dese yere gobblehs widin range. Mighty hard to fool 'em, I tell you; why, dey knows more 'n some preachers. I fetched

'em, dough, by callin' till I was nearly hoarse, and I jest histed 'em when I got de chance."

"Didn't you shoot them from a baited blind?" asked my companion.

"Loh, no, massa! I sweah I didn't; d'ye tink I'd kill a turkey like dat? No, massa; I knows better'n dat. I'se a sport, massa; I ain't no old cullud roost-robbeh."

"I doubt it," was the response; "as I never yet saw a nigger who would kill a turkey by fair means, if he could do it by foul, nor leave one on a roost, if he could get at it."

"But I sweah, massa—"

"Never mind your swearing. Did you see any more turkeys in the bottoms?"

"Whole lots, massa! Dat big gobbleh—"

"Did you hear him?"

"Yes."

"All right; let's be off," said he, turning to me, and without any more ceremony we resumed the march, while the unbleached American started for his cabin. After travelling for about fifteen minutes we came upon a blind with a trench in front of it, and, from the quantity of fresh grain and feathers scattered about, my companion surmised that it had been used that morning by the ebony-hued reprobate who had so strongly disavowed the crime of killing the birds with such a device. He gazed at this spot for some moments, then expressed his opinion, and that in the strongest terms, of the character of his unbleached fellow-countryman, and from this I inferred that he did not consider him the paragon of truth and honesty, or the ideal of a sportsman. Leaving this place, we walked onward for a few hundred yards, and found ourselves in the "bottoms," which were nothing more than the thickets bordering a savanna, through which flowed a dull and narrow stream. The woods were quite open, however, so that we could

command a good view in every direction. Having carefully scrutinized the ground, my companion said it was a good spot in which to build a blind.

"But there are no turkeys here," I exclaimed.

"Then we must try to bring them here," was the quiet answer.

As he seemed to know his business, I said nothing more, and, seating myself on a prostrate log, I calmly watched him as he hewed and bent oak, pine, and magnolia saplings, and arranged them into a sylvan screen. He cast a glance at me occasionally which signified that he thought I was not dead in love with hard work, and, as he interpreted my feelings rightly, I did not offer to explain matters to him. When he had finished it, he asked me if I had ever built a blind, and I replied that I had not.

"You look as though you wouldn't care to, either," said he, in a sly tone.

"Not particularly."

"You wouldn't even know where to build one, if you tried, I suppose?"

"Not so well as you."

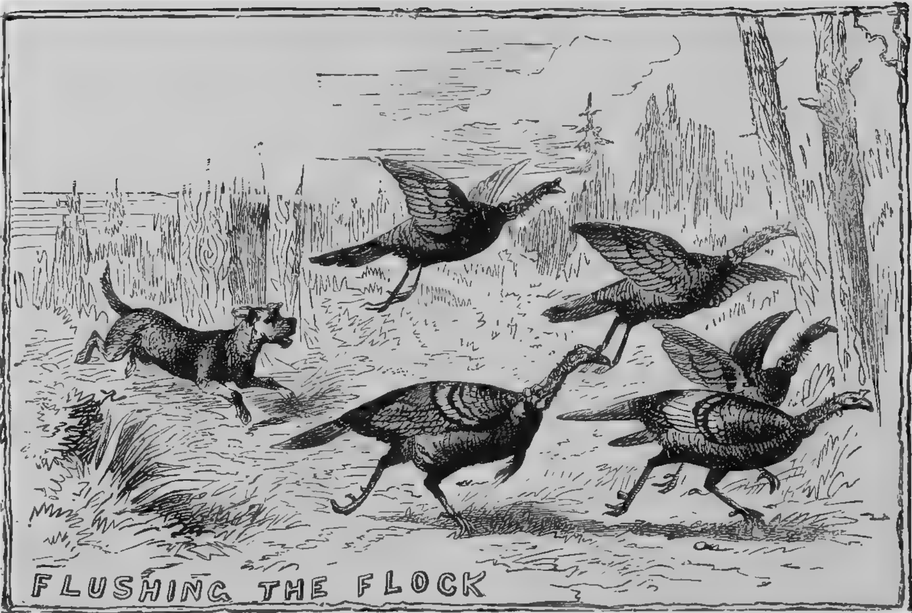
"Thank you; this is a turkey morning; compliments ain't in season. But, as I really think you don't know, I'll tell you:

The first thing is to select a good position in a place which turkeys are known to frequent, and then to build the blind so that it will conform in appearance with its surroundings, for turkeys are suspicious of everything unusual in the lay of the land. It must have a clear space in front, to enable you to fire at an object thirty or forty yards away with some assurance of success.

When you get inside the blind, take your bearings, and make up your mind not to shoot at a turkey until it gets to a certain point, for it looks, on account of its size, to be nearer than it actually is. You must'nt get

TURKEY TRAP.

CALLING TURKEYS


FLUSHING THE FLOCK

excited and let your heart bump the gun out of your hand; nor must your eyes get so big that you see ten turkeys instead of one. Keep cool, above all things; and if ever you get bald-headed keep your hat on, or the mosquitoes and sandflies may tickle you so much that you will feel more like killing them than the turkeys. Now, do you understand me plainly?"

"I think so."

"Then I have taught you the first lesson in turkey shooting; so we'll get inside the blind and see if you can't bag the enchanted gobbler."

We entered accordingly, and having seated ourselves on a fallen log, and loaded our guns with BBB shot, my cicerone indicated the various points at which he thought I could afford to risk firing at a bird, in case I got the chance. Having committed them to memory, I commenced putting his advice into practice by imagining that turkeys appeared on every special spot, and aiming at them in the coolest manner possible. While I was engaged in this mental and physical exercise, the settler was carefully improving the blind, by inserting leaves and grass in the larger openings, so as to prevent the sharpest-eyed gobbler from detecting us, but before he commenced doing this I had to promise I would not shoot him, in my excitement, by fancying he was a turkey. He said that some greenhorns imagined stumps, and mules, and niggers were gobblers, and frequently killed them in their ardor to bag something, but when I said I would not make such a mistake, he pretended to feel safer.

When everything was arranged to his satisfaction, he gave a coy yelp or two, then stopped to listen for an answer. Not receiving any, he rolled forth the seductive tones of the genuine wild turkey with a loudness and distinctness that caused the forest to reverberate with numerous echoes, and then relapsed into silence.

"That will bring them if they are around here," said he confidently.

His notes were so exact that I complimented him on his proficiency, and told him he was the best caller I had ever heard.

"I know I'm good enough at that business," said he slyly; "if they had a turkey-calling chair vacant in Yale College I think I could take it away from all competitors," and, as if to prove his statement, he sounded several appealing notes, which were delivered in the most endearing manner; but still no response came. After waiting for about ten minutes we heard a sharp yelp, which caused my blood to tingle with pleasant anticipation; but as he did not answer it, I asked him if he had heard it.

"Of course, I did," he replied, "but that fellow can't call for sour apples. He ain't much at the business."

"Wasn't that a turkey, then?"

"No; that was a man who is using a caller. No person can fool me unless he can call with his mouth alone, and then he must be good at it. He may fool a turkey, but he can't fool me."

Our conversation was disturbed at this point by a series of yelps and rolls and "keouks," but they sounded so badly that even I could tell they were uttered by a person who was not very proficient in the art of calling.

"That fellow will drive every turkey in the country out of it," exclaimed my companion petulantly, "and we'll only have our pains for our labor."

"What had we better do, then?" I asked.

"I know what I'll do," he exclaimed. He then poured forth such a series of erotic appeals, that the gobbler that heard and did not respond to them was flinty-hearted indeed, in my estimation. The only response to this, however, was the mocking cry of some ghostly owl, whose repose had been disturbed by the resonant notes.

"That fellow is mocking me," said my companion; "but if I knew where he was, I'd teach him better manners, if a dose of lead would do it."

"Why should he laugh at you?"

"Because he and that gobbler seem to be in partnership about laughing at me."

The jocose seriousness of his manner would have made me chuckle at another time, but just then my heart was set bounding by the rapid and vehement gobble of a veteran turkey. When the vocal roll died away, my companion poked me in the side, and in earnest, though hushed tones, exclaimed: "That's him!"

"Who?"

"Why, that enchanted gobbler. You see now that he and that owl are in partnership in mocking me."

"I'll soon dissolve the partnership if I catch that turkey within range," I exclaimed in a mock heroic tone; but my companion did not seem to think so, as he expressed his willingness to bet me any sum I pleased that I would run on seeing him. As I scorned to take any notice of such an insinuation, the caller gave a low yelp, and was answered by a throat-splitting gobble, which resounded throughout the forest.

"We have him sure this time," exclaimed the turkey actor, "and if you miss him after he gets to that place,"—pointing to a certain spot—"you'll never again be able to kill a turkey."

"You need not fear about my missing him," I said, as I peered cautiously about for the object of so much solicitude, but as it did not appear within the range of my vision, I asked the yelper to yelp again.

"Not I," was the response, "I'm the modest maiden, and that gobbler must come to me; mark that."

"A pretty maiden you are," I replied laughingly, when I glanced at his brawny form and rude attire, but instead of answering me he pointed to the right, and

though I looked earnestly in the direction indicated, I could see nothing resembling a turkey.

While I was peering, I heard the cheerful tzit boom of the gobbler as he struck the ground suddenly with his wings, and strutted about, trying to induce the supposed hen to come out and see him on parade. The caller waited a few minutes to see if the strutter would gobble again, and finding he did not, he gave a low and appealing call, and received in reply a long and throat-splitting roll of liquid sounds, which seemed to come from a small thicket only a few feet to the rear.

"He's flanking us," whispered the yelper. "You had better retreat now if you don't want him to attack you."

"I thought you said he would not bite?" I exclaimed.

"Did I? Well he seems to be in a mood to bite this morning, for I never before knew him to be so willing to advance."

"I'll make him bite the dust if he attempts to bite me," I replied. This was greeted by a loud gobble from the turkey, and a suggestion from my comrade that the bird was mocking me; but I disdained to notice such an insinuation.

"He knows where I am now," he continued, "but I'll have to encourage him a little more;" and suiting the action to the word, he indulged in two or three soft, endearing "keouks." When he finished, he told me to look out for the gobbler, and give him some small shot in the head if he left the thicket. I nodded assent, as I was so agitated that I did not dare to trust myself to even whisper; and having loaded one barrel with No. 6 shot, I drew back the hammer of the gun in the most noiseless manner, and poked the muzzle through the blind, in order to avoid all possibilities of a miss.

I was so anxious for the appearance of the expected visitor that every moment seemed to be a minute, but,

as he neither called nor presented himself, I was about to withdraw the gun, when he crept to the edge of the thicket and stared at the blind. After reconnoitring the ground in front he stood still, and, with one leg half-raised, as if he were suspicious of the very ground on which he stood, he surveyed his surroundings in the most cautious manner. I looked at him with admiring eyes for a few seconds, as he was one of the most superb specimens of his family I had ever seen, being full grown, and arrayed in a new suit of feathered armor, which glistened with a metallic effulgence of bronze and purple and green. Spurred and bearded, he looked to be the ideal of a feathered monarch of the forest, for his eyes glowed with a liquid brilliancy, while his attitude expressed pride, daring, and vigilance. Having feasted my eyes on his beauty, I made preparations to make a subsequent feast on his body, by taking a steady aim at his head and pulling the trigger. A sharp crack followed, and I expected to see him fall, but when I looked for his dead body I saw him footing it in the liveliest manner for the woods a little to the right. Seeing that he would soon disappear if I were not quick in my movements, I fired at him again just as he was about entering some bushes, and when the smoke cleared away I scanned the ground for him, but he was invisible. This caused me to give vent to an expression that would lead hypercritical persons to fancy I was not an angel, but it had scarcely been spoken before the who-who-who-are-you of the barred owl, the defiant gobble of the turkey, and a mocking laugh rang throughout the woods.

"Oh, yes, you're very clever!" said I to my companion, for it was he who had uttered the sounds.

"The animals are making fun of you, my boy," said he, in a bandying tone, "and I don't blame them after making such a miss as that."

"Why didn't you shoot him, then?"

"Because I never like to double-bank anything, let alone a poor turkey."

"A nice excuse that."

"Never mind, my boy, you scared him badly enough to make him run away, whereas I thought you would leg it on seeing him."

"I'm much obliged to you for your good opinion, but you need not express it, for I think I scared him to death."

"If he saw your face you might have done so; but he didn't—so you needn't imagine you did."

"I'm going to see about the matter, anyhow," said I, in a mock serious tone, for I had an idea I could not have missed with both barrels; so I left the blind, and started for the thicket, gun in hand, telling him to wait until I returned.

"Oh, I'm going with you," said he; "else you may go to the next farm-house and buy a gobbler, and, after shooting him, impose him on me as the old original."

"The most suspicious people are always the worst," I replied, in the gravest manner, "and I think you are an old sinner."

"I know I'm not a saint," he answered; "if I were, I wouldn't be shooting turkeys in the wilds of Florida."

When we reached the position where the turkey first stood, I saw some feathers there, and this induced me to indulge in some boasting at my friend's expense, but he insisted that the gobbler had plucked them out himself, in order to deceive me.

"Oh, you incorrigible!" I replied, "how you do like to discourage people!"

"You may not believe it, but it's a fact, nevertheless," he replied. "I have stuffed two beds with what feathers I shot out of him, and I think more than a dozen others have done the same, but still we can't kill him. He is enchanted, I tell you, and can't be bagged by

any person except a great prince who has carroty hair and a turned-up nose, and has slain more men single-handed than the hero in a dime novel."

"Go on with your romancing."

"All right. Now, you may not believe it, but I can assure you I have seen that turkey running through the woods without even a pin-feather on him. And I can also tell you that he didn't present a very respectable appearance without his clothes."

"What became of them?"

"They were all shot away by hunters."

We had reached the thicket by this time, and, on entering it, I saw bunches of feathers on the ground.

"You see," exclaimed my companion, "he's leaving them behind him. You may get enough to stuff a bed, if you keep on—"

I bounded forward before he could finish the sentence, for, lying on a bier composed of gaudy flowers, was the stately creature whose beauty I had so much admired, and whose life I had so eagerly sought. Lifting it up by the legs, I dangled it before my comrade's eyes, and, straightening myself up so as to assume as much altitude as possible, I looked him boldly in the face, while my features beamed with rectitude and the self-assertive air of a great conqueror. After staring at each other in silence for a short time, he curled up his lip, and said, disparagingly:

"Phew! that's nothing; that's not the gobbler I was talking about. Why, anybody that wasn't stone-blind could kill that fellow."

"That will do," I replied; "you are so jealous of me that you can't speak well of anything I do."

"Well, you haven't much to be proud of there, for that veteran is as old as the hills. He is the patriarch of the forest."

"I killed him, anyhow, and didn't run away from him,

so I am satisfied," I replied, as I started back for the blind with my trophy.

"The fellow was so rheumatic that he couldn't bite you, or he would have tried it," he said, and, to prove it, he made a careful examination of the bird, and commented on its apparent age and where I had hit it.

When all its bad qualities were discussed, my companion commenced calling again in the most careful manner—now low and endearing, anon loud, commanding, and vehement, as if to denounce the males for their want of gallantry in not responding to such appeals. Having called in vain for two hours, we concluded to change quarters, to see if we could not be more fortunate, so we walked about a mile to an open piece of woods, which looked quite promising. Seeing the ground scratched a good deal, we decided to build a blind there and try our luck, for it was evident that the birds were numerous somewhere in the vicinity.

We set about our task immediately, and while busily engaged on it, we were startled by the sharp and unexpected call of a turkey hen. This pleasant sound caused my companion to suspend operations abruptly, and cocking his ear, so as to catch the note in the most distinct manner, he listened intently until the seductive call was repeated, then answered it with a long and voluble gobble, and when that was over he indulged in a quiet fit of chuckling. I asked him what he was laughing at, and received as a reply, "Do you want to fool that human turkey hen?"

Thinking there might be some fun in the matter, I assented willingly; and, when the next call was heard, my companion and myself started in the direction whence it emanated, while he kept pouring forth a volume of loud gobbles which would have done honor to the sturdiest turkey-cock in the forest. When we had traversed a distance of five or six hundred yards we came

to a blind, and saw a man, gun in hand, standing up in full view behind it. He wore a most rueful countenance, and when my cicerone advanced and cordially shook hands with him, he did not seem to have feeling enough to perform even that simple act of courtesy in an earnest manner. After I had been introduced to him, my comrade asked him if he had not been "fooled" nicely, and he replied that he had, and was sorely disappointed at the result of such splendid gobbling.

"No man in the country but you could a-done it," said he, in a little more animated tone; "and it is a consolation to know that I'm not the first one you played your durned old trick on."

"Oh! never mind the trick now," exclaimed my companion; "so don't look as if you had lost your mother-in-law. Have you killed anything?"

"No."

"Then we must get something, if its only a powt. Let's try to rout a flock, for I see you have your dog with you."

This proposition proving acceptable, we started through the woods and set the dog to work. He seemed to be a cross between a hound and a spaniel, as he displayed some of the distinct markings of both breeds; but whatever he was he knew his business, for he carefully quartered the ground, using both his eyes and nose in the most admirable manner. After working for fifteen minutes, he struck the hot trail of a feeding flock, and dashed away from us. We followed as fast as we could, and soon heard the sharp put, put, the whirring rush of many wings, and the vigorous bark of the dog, to announce that he had flushed the quarry. We ran a few hundred yards further, and on reaching a glade we built a blind in a very short time, by entwining the bushes, and breaking them down where we thought necessary. When this was ready, we entered, and the

dog having crouched behind us, he was covered with leaves to conceal the light-colored spots on his body. My companion then commenced his endearing calling, and performed his part so well that I decided that if any man could bag an enchanted turkey he could, as he was undoubtedly the chief of yelpers. His call was soon responded to by the rattling cry of a young turkey, which was evidently some distance away.

"I'm going to have that fellow if he comes near here!" exclaimed my new acquaintance, who rejoiced in the name of Hank Greene.

"I'll bet you ten dollars to one you can't hit the first turkey that comes within twenty yards of you," said my friend.

"Done!" and a hand shake followed to decide it.

The yelper then resumed his calling, and soon received a vehement reply from an adult which was not, apparently, thirty yards away. His resonant call stirred my blood like a bugle blast, and gave me an excellent idea of one of the causes that makes turkey-hunters so enthusiastic about the sport. He received no endearing response in return, however, for we were busy loading our guns in hot haste, in order to give him a warm reception when he appeared. Finding that the supposed hen was coy, he flew down from his perch and announced the fact by a loud gobble, and received in answer a soft but distinct yelp. This induced him to make an effort to split his throat, for he poured out volumes of gobbles in rapid succession.

"That's the enchanted gobbler, I do believe!" exclaimed my cicerone; "and if he is, you"—motioning his head to Greene—"are to have the first shot, and you (me) the second, if he misses."

Greene laughed at the idea of missing, and the other also chuckled in the most intense manner, as if he thought there was something exceedingly ludicrous in the

matter. The gobbler had been calling for some time without receiving a response, and this made him so angry that he advanced to a thicket, but, being too cautious to pass through it, he flanked it, and appeared on our left, twenty yards away, and commenced strutting in the most pompous manner.

"Fire, Hank," whispered my comrade.

Hank raised his gun slowly to his face and pulled the trigger, but the only noise it made was a slight click, which caused the gobbler to look intently towards us, and stop his parading. Before the splendid creature could decide what to do—whether to stand or run—for he looked suspiciously at us, I gave him the contents of the right barrel, which was loaded with five drachms of powder and an ounce of BBB shot, and when the smoke cleared away I saw him struggling in the throes of dissolution.

"That's the enchanted gobbler, beyond doubt!" exclaimed my friend, as he gazed into the face of the stupefied and disgusted Hank, who was eyeing him with a mingled expression of blank stupidity and suspicion.

After a long pause Greene recovered his tongue, and dolefully said:

"If you hadn't drawn my cartridges, I'd have jest blown that fellow to smithereens. It was one of the prettiest shots I ever saw. I wouldn't have missed him for five dollars. I'm out of luck now for the day."

This pathetic expression only caused the other to laugh heartily, and when I left the blind to secure my trophy, he was indulging in a severe fit of coughing, owing to the intensity of his cachinnatory exercise. When I returned and showed Greene what a splendid bird he had lost, he looked more doleful than ever, and eyed it with such longing glances that I offered it to him, but he would not hear of such a thing, as he did not consider himself entitled to it. As the turkeys were ap-

parently abundant, my friend commenced calling again, and in a short time we had the satisfaction of hearing the faint, far-off notes of two or three young gobblers. This caused Greene to jump to his feet, gun in hand; but my friend advised him to keep quiet, and not to shoot until the birds came in sight; so he sat down again, with as rueful a countenance as if he were overpowered with a load of sorrow. The lost turkey was evidently preying on his mind and destroying his happiness.

After calling for half an hour, we saw two young gobblers advancing up an avenue of trees, but they moved very slowly, peered about them constantly, as if they feared that every bush contained a foe, and stopped frequently, and for some time, in order to get the direction of the call. They came within range at length, much to our delight, and, jumping on a log, seemed to look into the muzzles of the guns which were pointed at them. As I had killed my brace during the morning, I decided to give the others a chance, so I watched the actions of the feathered visitors, while my companions were preparing a reception for them. When they were ready, Greene whispered "Fire!" and both pulled trigger together, but only one report was heard, and that was from Greene's gun. The result was one dead bird, which had been cleanly killed, but the second dashed away at race-horse speed, and disappeared in the forest. When it had vanished from sight my cicerone turned towards his rival, looked ruefully into his face, bowed his head sorrowfully, and, extending his digits, which the other took, both shook hands slowly, solemnly, and in silence, as if the occasion were too solemn for utterance. The Chief of Yelpers having performed this ceremony, opened wide his arms, and, in a highly-pitched, tragic voice, invited his brother in misfortune to enter them. The invitation being accepted, both embraced and pre-

tended to weep over the perfidy of man and the splendid shots they had lost. They shook hands again after the embrace, and my friend told his "brother" that his conduct had been so noble in thus turning the tables that he would waive all claim to the sum of money which was due to him, and suggested that it should be taken out in drinks the next time they met in town. This proposition being favorably received, they doffed hats, bowed lowly, and promised to let each other's cartridges alone for the future, as abstracting them from guns while out shooting was unworthy of generous rivals. The dead turkey having been brought in, the two men commenced calling alternately—one using his mouth, and the other a caller made out of a turkey's wing—but, not receiving any response after two hours' steady calling, they concluded to start for home. On our way back we met a man who had been in a blind for eight hours, and though he had been calling persistently, and receiving responses occasionally, yet no turkey had been polite enough to come within range of his gun.

Finding he could do nothing that day, he joined us on our homeward march, and as we trudged onward my waggish friend regaled him with the tale about the enchanted turkey, and insisted that we had killed it, so that it would never again be heard in that part of the world. Greene insisted that we had not killed it, and that it would live forever as a monument to the superstitions of negroes, and the romancing power of certain hunters, who had lived so long among the gobblers that the only language they could speak properly was that of the turkeys. The march was enlivened by so many witty sallies and grim jokes that I was sorry when our roads diverged, and each wended his way to his own domicile. For gobblers dead, what more than funeral rites! My "enchanted" specimen having been found to turn the scales at twenty-five pounds, was roasted to a nut-brown

by the hostess, and we crowned our labor with a feast fit for the daintiest of epicures, for the bird was in the finest condition.

Lying in ambush, and alluring turkeys to it by appealing to their erotic feelings, may not be the highest form of sport, yet it is far superior to grouse-shooting on preserved moors, or pheasant battues, which are really a "slaughter of the innocents." It is not pulling a trigger and bagging a bird that constitutes true sport—that, really, ought to be the secondary consideration—it is the opportunity which a love of the gun affords for rambling amidst delightful scenes and of communing with nature in her various moods. What can be more interesting than to ride on horseback, day after day, from sunrise to sunset, over hills and through woods and valleys, and camp each evening in some wild or picturesque nook, or seek shelter in a lonely farm-house, where eternal hospitality reigns and every wayfarer is made welcome. When a party of men start out on a turkey-hunting expedition, they may travel for days without meeting a flock, in some regions, whereas they may be able to discharge their guns twenty times a day in others. It is the uncertainty of finding, and the difficulty of outwitting, the birds that makes their pursuit so infatuating to true sportsmen, and not the mere killing; hence, the enthusiasm of successful turkey-hunters is quite pardonable. The gobble of the bird is a blood-quickening song, which some men love better than any refrain in an opera; while the death of a male adult makes them feel like victorious generals. That the pursuit of the bird is very attractive is quite evident, when we consider that men are willing to "rough" it, in the literal sense of the word, by riding fifteen or twenty miles a day over mountains, across streams, through dense forests and almost impenetrable thickets, and pull down and put up fences for the sake of bagging a gobbler.

A good turkey-dog is almost a necessity where birds are scarce, and he, like the successful caller and the poet, must be born so, though training will do much for him; in fact, he must be trained specially for his work. No matter how good he may be, however, unless his master is acquainted with the habits of the birds the number brought to bag will be exceedingly small, for the best of marksmen is not always sure of his turkey at a distance of twenty paces, even though it be standing still, and broadside on. Men may wait for hours in a blind, and not get a shot, although the birds may be numerous in the vicinity, and as for stalking them with any positive assurance of success—well, let any person try it. He may ambush them or kill them on their roosts, but these methods do not equal the pleasure of shooting them over dogs, or even of chasing them on horseback.

I have heard adepts with the gun say that they missed turkeys more frequently than any other members of the feathered tribe, and that they were by far the most difficult birds they knew to be caught off their guard. In portions of Florida, Texas, Arizona, the Indian Territory, and contiguous regions, where the birds know little or nothing of man, flocks of them may be met with suddenly, and if they flush they will either sail over the sportsman's head or fly into the first convenient trees. I have even known them, when shot at from blinds, to fly forward at such a low altitude as to afford good wing-shooting. It would be better in such cases to allow them to pass by a few yards before firing than to shoot when they are coming, as the mass of feathers on the breast may turn the shot; whereas it is sure to take effect from the rear. The instances in which turkeys fly towards one are exceptional, for, as a rule, they only come close enough to set persons to speculating about their age and weight, and how nice they would look when roasted and stuffed with *fois gras*, oysters, walnuts, or bread and sage.

I have sought them occasionally under various conditions and with different degrees of success, and I can say that I never returned from a trip after them, whether fortunate or otherwise, without feeling improved mentally and physically, and having a more exalted opinion of them, as the monarchs of the American game-birds—they having every essential quality necessary to win the admiration of sportsmen who like to work for their trophies. To show how readily they may be killed where they are numerous and little hunted, I may mention the fact that a party of four men killed seventy-five in two nights in the Indian Territory, nearly all of which were shot from the tops of trees. When these men could not find them by glancing into the foliage, a trained vocalist imitated the hoot of the large owl, and soon received a peremptory answer from every gobbler in the neighborhood. Their position being made known by this simple trick, little difficulty was experienced in bagging them, for they were so loth to fly that one of the party killed five in one tree with a Winchester rifle.

The largest bag I ever made in a day, was seven, and I killed them in about half an hour, in Southern Colorado. I happened to be riding along the base of a shrub-clad hill, when a Mexican approached and asked me in his native patois if I had seen horses bearing a certain brand, in my travels. I answered in the negative, and was about to ask him how far it was to a certain farm-house, when he darted towards a clump of cedars some four or five hundred yards distant. I thought, on seeing his sudden departure, that my efforts at speaking his native tongue had set him crazy, but I changed my opinion as soon as I saw him fire his revolver at some objects, and then chase them as fast as his mustang could run. After watching him for a few moments, I saw that the objects he was pursuing were nothing less than turkeys, and as they were approaching me, I dismounted,

took aim when they came within range, and killed the leader in his tracks. This caused the others to head up the hill; I followed in hot pursuit, and on reaching the crest of the mound-like ridge I got another shot, but it proved to be a miss. Before I could get a second one, a splendid stag jumped out of covert and dashed away at a bounding gait, but ere he could get out of sight I fired at him, and brought him headlong to the ground. He was up and off again in a moment, however, and the last I saw of him was a switching white tail as he disappeared in the undergrowth. I fancied at first that I had killed him, but when I saw him move away at the pace he did, I concluded I had only hurt his feelings. As soon as he had vanished, I entered a coppice, and saw eight turkeys advancing towards me in the most heedless manner. Dismounting, I took aim over the horse's back, and fired twice at them, but I only killed one. I scared them badly though, for they retreated with the speed of greyhounds. Picking up my trophy, I mounted my steed and ran around the coppice to head them off, as I had seen them fly in that direction. On reaching my position, I dismounted, squatted on the ground behind a tree, and waited patiently for their appearance. They did not keep me long in suspense, for they came out of the bushes, not thirty feet away, and the moment they appeared I opened fire, and bagged two.

The remainder darted back into the woods, and thinking they would head for the extreme crest of the hill, I galloped in that direction and had scarcely reached the shelter of a huge granite boulder before I heard the anxious call of the leader of the flock. He was answered in a short time, and in less than fifteen minutes more I saw a nice drove of twenty or thirty emerging from the shrubbery. When I got them in a bunch I flushed them, fired, and bagged two, as they flew very slowly and heavily. Having as many as I cared to carry, I started

for my destination, and reached it early in the afternoon, but I found that the person I sought was encamped about three miles distant, he being absent on a hunting expedition. I rode to his quarters and was cordially greeted by himself and his companions, and complimented on my good fortune in securing so many birds.

These were handed to the cook with instructions to roast them in the highest style of art known in the wilderness, and he promised not only to obey but to show what could be done with them in a culinary sense. This led to a conversation about preparing food in camp, until it finally developed into a suggestion that we ought to indulge in a game dinner that evening. The suggestion being favorably received, each of us seized a gun or a fishing-rod, and sallied forth to replenish our larder. I went after quail, and was so successful that I returned to camp in about an hour with seven brace.

I gave these to the cook, and he commenced preparing them for dinner immediately. Having plucked three, he placed them in the abdominal cavities of three turkeys, and chuckled as he did so. He then placed six forked-sticks, in twos, quite close to the fire; spitted the turkeys with straight, thin sticks; and laid the ends of each stick in the upright crotches. The birds were turned slowly and basted with butter, flour, salt, and water, which dripped into pans placed beneath.

"That's the way to cook a turkey in camp," exclaimed the chief of the kitchen; "and I'll bet you'll say its the sweetest turkey you ever ate, after you've tried it."

I said I hoped he was right, and that I could vouch for the richness of the odor, it being superior to any I could recall. The remainder of the party returned in a short time with a goodly supply of provender, one having a young buck on his shoulders and another carrying a string of trout in his hand. These were also soon undergoing the process of cooking, and when they were ready

we sat down to a feast fit for the chief gods and goddesses of the forest. When the turkeys were opened, and the quail found inside, the gentleman who acted as carver said slowly, and in a serious tone:—

"Well, I must say that these are the durndest turkeys I ever saw. I've been acquainted with turkeys now for nearly forty years, but these are the first I ever knew to carry their young in their innards. The ways of nature in the West are inscrutable. Let us pray—for more of such turkeys."

The "young" were roasted in admirable style, and divided the honors with the birds in which they were stowed away. Roast turkey and grilled venison steaks were the *pieces de resistance* of the feast; but the dishes which elicited the most discussion were venison stew and the salmon trout. Having finished the meal, we threw ourselves on the ground before the fire, and, lighting our cigars, indulged in angling, shooting, and hunting expeditions until near midnight, when we retired to rest on beds of fragrant cedar boughs, our lullaby being sung by the soughing and the sighing of the forest.

CHAPTER II.

THE PINNATED GROUSE.

Grouse—Their haunts—Differences between the European and American species—How to distinguish each genus—The prairie fowl—General hue—Pugnacious males—The use of the gular sacs—Birds breed in captivity—Artifices of the female to protect her young—Her signal of danger—Increase in the number of grouse—The color of the flesh changed by frosty weather—The shooting season—Haunts of the birds—Marking them down on the prairie—How dogs should be trained—The Texas variety of pinnated grouse—Shooting from an open carriage—The best grouse regions—Number of prairie fowl destroyed annually—A stirring scene—Sir Thomas More's opinion of sport—A Western Diana—A day with the prairie chickens—Rivals in the field—A runaway—Good luck—How we spent St. Prairie Chicken Day.

Grouse are more abundant in Canada and the United States than in any other part of the world, especially in the western and north-western divisions, where they still have plenty of room, both in the forest and on the prairie, in which to thrive and multiply. Of the various species and their varieties known on the American Continent, the prairie fowl and the sharp-tailed grouse are confined to prairies; the sage-cock is a denizen of the sterile plains where artemisia prevails; the ptarmigans frequent the more arctic portions of the country and the snowy mountains; and those placed under the head of *Canace* and *Bonasa* inhabit wooded regions.

The American species of wood grouse are considered to be generically distinct from the *Tetraoninæ* of Europe, taking the capercailzie (*T. urogallus*) as the type, as the latter has a high, compressed, and light-colored bill, lengthened and stiffened feathers on the head and neck, and metallic colors. The *Canace* proper, which is represented by the spruce-grouse, has its nearest analogue in

the Siberian grouse (*T. falcipennis*), which differs merely in its longer and more slender primaries. The black cock (*T. tetrix*) has a representative in the dusky, or pine grouse (*Canace obscura*), but it differs from the latter materially in its metallic colors and peculiarly-formed tail. The bills of both species are much alike. The nearest kindred of the *Bonasa sylvestris* of Europe is the ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), which is generally known by the name of pheasant in the West and Southwest. The ptarmigans of both continents are so much alike in plumage and habits that the amateur naturalist or the sportsman will find little difficulty in recognizing those which are allied, although he may hear the American species called white quail in some portions of the Northwest.

The grouse are known indiscriminately by the names of partridges and pheasants in various parts of Canada and the United States, although there is not a true partridge or pheasant on the continent, and if there were it would be an easy matter to distinguish them from the *Tetraoninæ.* The partridges, in the first place, have naked nostrils and tarsi, while these are more or less feathered in the grouse; the latter also have a strip of naked red or orange skin over the eye, a row of comb-like scales on the sides of the toes, and, usually, a tuft of feathers or a patch of naked, distensible skin, or both, on each side of the neck. The tail feathers also vary from sixteen to twenty in number, and the tail is forked, rounded, or acute. Each species of grouse may be readily distinguished apart by noting the peculiarities of the neck, tail feathers, and tarsi. Those placed in the genus *Canace* have a rather square tail, which is nearly as long as the wing, and is composed of from sixteen to twenty broad, rounded feathers. The tarsi are feathered to the toes, and the neck is devoid of naked spaces and lengthened plumes of peculiar feathers. The ptarmi-

gans, which are classed in the genus *Lagopus*, resemble the preceding, except that the toes are feathered and that the plumage turns white in winter. The *Cupidonia*, to which the prairie chicken belongs, has a tail that is shorter than the wing, and is composed of eighteen broad, flat feathers. The sides of the neck have tufts or little wings of long, narrow feathers, beneath which is a strongly marked piece of naked skin that is capable of distension. The tarsi are barely feathered to the toes, and the markings of the under parts run crosswise. In the *Bonasa*, the tail, which is composed of eighteen broad, rounded feathers, is as long as the wing; the tarsi are naked below; there is no evident naked space on the neck, but on each side are numerous broad, soft feathers, which form tufts. The *Pediocetes*, or sharp-tailed grouse, have a wedge-shaped tail of eighteen narrow feathers, of which the two in the middle are an inch or more longer than the others. The more northern birds have the tarsi and toes feathered, but in the southern variety the feathering does not extend further than the roots of the toes. The neck is devoid of peculiar feathers, and the markings of the under parts run lengthwise, instead of crosswise—as in the prairie chicken—so that both species can be readily distinguished apart. The *Centrocercus*, which is represented by the sage-cock, has a tail that equals or exceeds the wing in length. This is wedge-shaped, and composed of twenty narrow, stiff feathers, about a foot long. The tarsi are feathered; the toes are naked; the neck has a large naked space, a patch of scale-like feathers, and many bristly filaments. This species can be readily identified anywhere by its size and plumage and its peculiar markings.

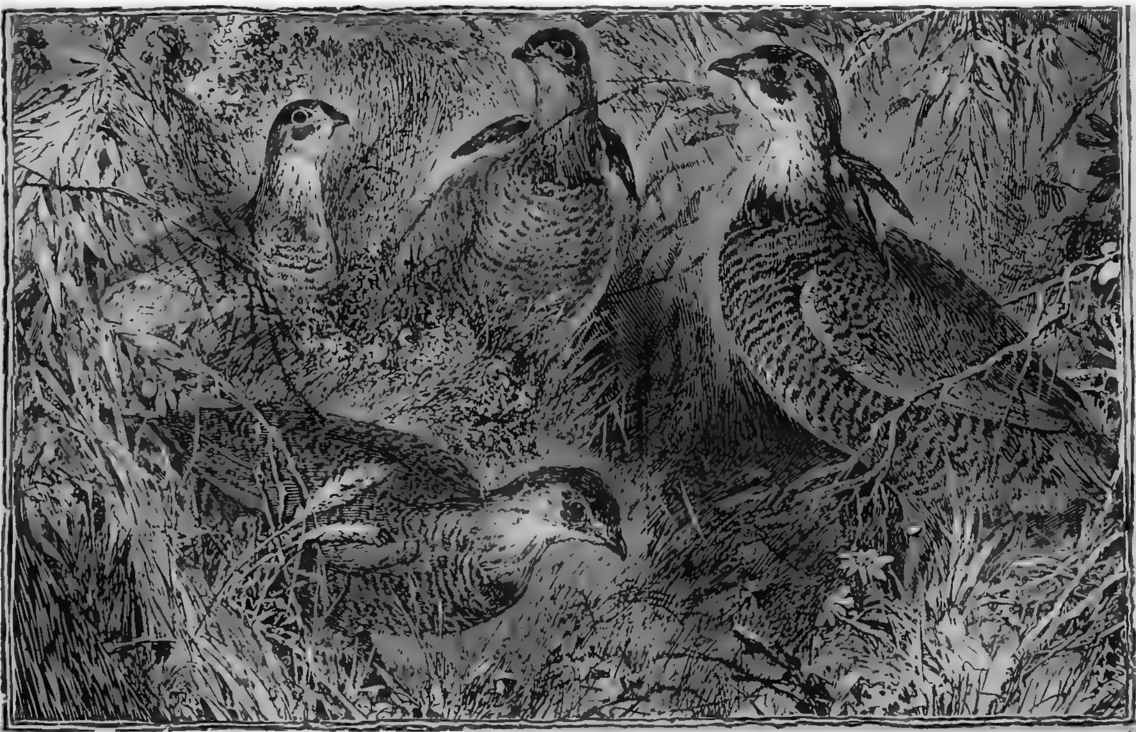
The following diagram will give an idea of the distinctions between each genus:

Features.	Genus	Genus	Genus	Genus	Genus	Genus	Genus
	Tetrao.	Canace.	Dendragapus.	Cupidonia.	Pediœcetes.	Centrocercus.	Bonasa.
Tail.	18 feathers—two-third length of wing.	16 feathers—about equal to wing in length	20 feathers—two-third length of wing, sometimes more.	18 feathers—one-half length of wing.	18 feathers—one half length of wing.	20 feathers—about equal to wing in length.	18 feathers—about equal to wing in length.
Tarsi.	Feathered to the toes.	do.	do.	do.	do.	do.	Feathered about ¾ their length, with hexagonal scales anteriorly.
Toes.	Middle and claw longer than tarsus.	Middle and claw as long or longer than tarsus.	do.	Middle toe and claw longer than tarsus.	do.	do.	do.
Head.	Indications of crest. Pectinated processes over the eyes.	No crest. Pectinated processes over the eyes.	No positive crest. Pectinated processes over the eyes.	No positive crest, though sometimes apparent. Pectinated processes over the eyes.	Faint indications of crest. Pectinated processes over the eyes.	No positive crest. Pectinated processes over the eyes.	Slight crest. No pectinated processes over the eyes, being replaced by short, stiff feathers.
	No unusual feathers on neck nor true gular sacs.	No unusual feathers on neck nor gular sacs.	Gular sacs present.	Plumes on neck. Gular sacs present.	Slight indications of elongated feathers on neck.	Stiffened feathers on neck. Gular sacs present.	Plumes on neck forming a ruff. Gular sacs wanting.
	Lengthened.	Slender.	Medium.	Medium.	Slightly stouter than cupidonia, yet difference not always appreciable.	Lengthened.—Resembles Tetrao.	Medium.
In other genera.	None.	Two less feathers in tail.	None.	None.	None.	None.	Stiffened feathers instead of pectinated processes over eyes; well developed ruff.

The prairie fowl (*Cupidonia Cupido*) is probably the best known member of its family, and is, by many persons, considered to excel all the others in delicacy of flesh and game qualities. Its general color is blackish-brown, varied with tawny; the throat is buff, and the vent and under tail-coverts are white. It carries the well-known distensible sacs on each side of the neck, and the little wings or tufts which have given it the specific name it bears.

When the males are soliciting the company of the opposite sex in the spring, they inflate these sacs to the size of a small orange, expand the winglets, spread and erect the tail, and commence booming, or tooting, long before daybreak, and continue it until sunset in places where they are numerous; but where they are hunted much, they are seldom heard after sunrise. They are always pugnacious, but unusually so at this period; hence, if two meet, they indulge in fierce battles, which terminate only by the flight or death of one of them. When they are "calling," the air reservoirs, which are alternately filled and emptied, produce sounds not unlike the roll of a muffled drum. This roll can be heard a mile away in calm weather; but if the skin is punctured it ceases to be resonant. As soon as the love season is over, the hens leave the males and build their nests of grass and leaves in the open prairie or under the shelter of a bush. The number of eggs laid by each varies from ten to sixteen; these are a light-brownish color, irregularly spotted with black. If the first eggs are destroyed, another set is laid, but if not, only one brood is raised in a season.

When the young appear, the mother displays the greatest solicitude for their welfare, and keeps steadily calling to them whenever they manifest a disposition to stray from her side. If a man approaches them she ruffles up her feathers and assumes a combative attitude,



A PACK OF PINNATED GROUSE.

but she seldom flies at him, preferring to lead him away from them by various artifices. She warns the brood of danger by a single loud cluck, and the moment they hear it they disperse in every direction, and squat so close to the ground, in the tall grass or grain, that it is almost impossible to detect them without the aid of a dog. They remain in cover until the mother announces that the danger is over and calls them to her side.

They are so fully developed by the fifteenth of August, although only hatched in June, that they afford excellent sport, as they are strong on the wing, and their flight, though regular, is rather swift. Being fast runners, they generally try to escape on foot before attempting to use their pinions. The young males are so exceedingly combative, that members of the same brood indulge in contests in the autumn, but these are generally suppressed by the mother before they lead to bloodshed.

Audubon says that the males which he had domesticated were conspicuous for their courage, and would even fight the turkeys and dunghill cocks rather than yield their ground. They were more pugnacious in spring than at any other time, and strutted, tooted, and fought each other as they do in the wild state. He found the birds of both sexes readily amenable to domestication, for he had sixty in his garden at one time, and they became so tame during the winter that they would feed from his hand. These bred in confinement, but the broods were so destructive to vegetation that he was compelled to kill them.

Pinnated grouse are so abundant in portions of the West that it is nothing unusual for a person armed with a breech-loading gun to bag from twenty to thirty brace in a day, but as they increase in numbers wherever civilized man settles, there is no danger that they will become scarce for many years to come, as they find an abundance of food in the numerous insects that live on the prairie,

and the grain left in the stubble fields. They are said to follow man wherever he goes, the proof of this being furnished by their presence in several cultivated regions beyond the Rocky Mountains where they were unknown a few years ago. They have now been traced as far westward as Nevada, and will, no doubt, soon be found beyond the Sierra Nevadas, in California. The western sportsmen have a saying that the pinnated grouse follows the railroad, whereas the sharp-tail flees before it, and they infer from this that the former can thrive in the vicinity of man, but that the latter cannot.

Several experiments which have been made, prove that it is readily susceptible to domestication, and that, in contradistinction to the usual habits of its family, it will not only pair but breed in confinement. Another great advantage it possesses over its kindred is, that it is not very migratory, and manifests no desire to leave the vicinity of the barn-yard if it obtains plenty of its favorite food, and an opportunity of taking an occasional run in the grass. Its domestication would evidently prove profitable, as it is very prolific, weighs from two to nearly three pounds, and has white and succulent flesh. One curious fact about the flesh is, that it often turns dark after a few frosty nights, and loses much of its pleasant flavor. Those who are epicurian in taste do not like it so well then as in the earlier portion of the season, so it may be said to be in prime condition only between the fifteenth of August and the first or middle of October. The shooting season really closes about the first of November, for after that time the birds become so wild that they will not lie well to the dogs; but persons who wish to try their skill at long ranges will find this and the following month the best for their purpose, provided they do not care for long tramping and a small bag. When the shooting is about over the trapping commences, for as soon as the snow causes the birds

to seek the woods for shelter and the cornfields for food, vast numbers are trapped by means of every known device, and forwarded to the Atlantic States and Europe. This method of capture is made easy by the habit the creatures have of uniting in large packs as soon as the weather becomes frosty, and of travelling together, even into the snares set for them.

The general habits of the prairie chickens are now so well known that experienced sportsmen know where to seek for them at any time of the day or year. They are found in stubble fields and patches of flax and beans during the morning in the early part of the season, or on ridges and hillocks where the grass is short; but about ten o'clock, when the sun begins to get hot, they retire to the long grass and lie there until four or five o'clock P. M., when they resort to the fields again for food. They are sure to be found on the lee of a ridge if the wind blows strongly, and near the margins of sloughs in the evening. The cornfields are favorite retreats during the middle of the day, as the long stalks protect them from the glare of the sun, and the ground is loose enough to enable them to enjoy their dust bath, which is their panacea for parasites. Dogs find it very difficult to work them up in such localities, owing to their habit of skulking and the dryness of the earth. The sportsman also learns in a short time that he cannot make a large bag in tall corn, as he must depend entirely on snap shots, and he cannot mark them down when they alight after being flushed.

The most experienced sportsmen rest during the heat of the day, and depend on morning and evening shooting for making their big bags, as the birds lie better to dogs then than at any other time. They are also found more promptly, as their scent is strong, and is borne some distance away by the gentle breezes that generally blow for a few hours after sunrise and before sunset. They re-

main in the stubble fields all day in damp or cloudy weather, unless driven out by beating, and as they are then very tame, a person may approach them to within a few feet before they flush. The result is, that his bag is generally heavy, for the cool air and exercise brace up his nerves to such a pitch that he may score with his right and left barrels, in the majority of cases, without much trouble.

Later in the season, that is, from about the last of October to the latter end of December, the middle of the day is an excellent time for pursuing them, as they like to bask in the sun in open places; but as they are very wild, strong on the wing, and fly rapidly, it requires good shooting and hard hitting to kill them. When flushed, if the day is cold and the wind blustry, they may fly ten miles or more before they alight. It takes No. 6 shot and a good choke-bore to bring them down at that time, whereas, No. 8 or 9 is fully large enough in the early part of the season.

They seem to be wilder in cloudy or rainy than in fine weather, late in the autumn, for they take wing almost as soon as they hear the human voice or detect the presence of a dog, but on sunny days they will often permit the animal to approach them to within fifteen or twenty yards, as if they were too lazy to fly, or revelled so much in the sunshine that they disliked leaving the spots where its warm rays fell. When they do rise, however, it is with a startling whirr, and as soon as they fairly get on the wing they scud away at such a rate of speed that it requires a close, hard-hitting gun to stop them. Most of the birds spring from their shelter on hearing the voice, or the report of a gun, but several may stay behind, and as these often rise singly before a dog, a man can grass the majority of them. When the ground is covered with snow, they may be readily found in the timber, as they keep cackling, crooning, and chattering to one another, like the domestic fowls when roosting.

When the packs are flushed on the prairie, they should be marked down by some landmark, shrub, or clump of weeds, if any are visible, for if the eyes are once lifted from the spot in which they alight, it is difficult to find it again, as the sea of grass looks so much alike that it is liable to deceive the most experienced prairie traveller. When they lie well to the dogs, it is better to allow them some grace, when they are flushed, as a man is liable to tear them badly with the shot if he fires at too close a range. Dogs that are not acquainted with their habits frequently flush them unintentionally, and when they do this the alarmed packs cluck loudly, arouse all their congeners within hearing, and cause them to take wing, so that a person may not be able to get half a dozen shots during the morning. This readiness to flush is most marked during the late autumn and winter, when they are very wild, for the tone of the voice will rout them then, even at a distance of a hundred yards or more. To avoid making any noise, it is therefore necessary that the dogs should be trained to hunt by the motion of the hand, and to answer the whistle. Pointers are considered better than setters for work on the prairie, especially in warm weather, as their color is more conspicuous, and they can go longer without water. A variety of the pinnated grouse which bears the varietal name of *callidicinctus*, is found in Texas. This differs from the typical species only in being barred above with pale ochraceous and dusky or blackish-brown, being whitish beneath, having narrow bars of pale grayish brown, and being somewhat smaller. Both have the same habits, and are shot in the same manner. In order to thoroughly enjoy the pursuit of prairie chickens, experienced sportsmen use an open carriage or a wagon, as this is necessary to transport the dogs, guns, and a keg of water to the shooting grounds, if they are any way distant; it also saves much needless walking, for while

the dogs are ranging widely, the men can follow them in the carriage, and alight when the animals come to a point. It also enables them to travel rapidly after flushed packs, so that little time is wasted in searching for them.

The best regions for pinnated grouse are the tier of States running north from Texas to Manitoba, and west from Illinois to the Rocky Mountains. Of these the preference might, perhaps, be given to Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Dakota, and portions of Colorado and the Indian Territory. It is nothing unusual for a farmer to bag two or three thousand birds in a season in some of these places, with an old muzzle-loader, but the number shot by market hunters cannot even be estimated. I heard a very well-informed sportsman say that from half a million to a million birds were killed annually in Iowa alone, and allowing that the same destruction, in proportion to their numbers, takes place in other States, one can readily imagine the havoc committed among them. This statement is probably in no way exaggerated, as it is well known that many persons who supply the market often trap from one to two thousand birds in a week, especially in snowy weather, and sell them so cheaply that the poorest class of laborers can indulge in game dinners.

One of the most interesting scenes of its character to be met with anywhere, is that visible on the prairies as soon as the shooting season opens, on the fifteenth of August; for on that day sulkies, phaetons, wagons, and traps of various kinds may be seen travelling over the emerald sea of grass; eager men and dogs range in all directions; the sky is peppered with flying packs; many miniature clouds of powder smoke hang in the air or lazily float along; while the detonations of the guns come ringing from every quarter, and the rapid flashes are followed by showers of feathers. These incidents may not be such as to appeal to the highest moral law, yet few

men of a virile nature, and in vigorous health, can look upon them with indifference. Sir Thomas More had an apology for his love of sport which those who like it for its own sake might quote in their favor, for he says:

> "Manhood I am; therefore I me delight
> To hunt and hawk; to nourish up and feed
> The greyhounds to the course, the hawk to flight,
> And to bestride a good and lusty steed."

One of the most interesting days that I spent in pursuit of the pinnated grouse passed in Kansas. I was stopping at the time in the house of a man who was a fine type of the old Kentucky gentleman. He owned a large tract of land and lived in almost baronial style, surrounded by his herds and flocks, and respected by his neighbors. His family consisted of three daughters, the eldest of whom was a tall, graceful, and accomplished brunette, who combined in her person the daring of a Di Vernon and the artlessness of a child. She knew almost as much about hounds and horses and birds and guns as her father, and could handle a revolver better than many men. She was a Diana in her love of field sports, but combined with that was a feeling of delicacy and refinement, and a warm, true heart which soon caused persons to forget the idea of masculinity which would come into the mind on first becoming acquainted with her tastes and fearlessness. Having no son, the father doted on her, as she frequently drove the carriage while he was out after game, and she was sure to be among the first in at the death of wolf or fox when mounted battues were held, and she took part in them. While I was at her home I had a good opportunity of learning how clever she was with gun or pencil; hence, I was not surprised to hear the old General say to me one morning:

"By-the-bye, to-morrow is St. Prairie Chicken day, and I've been thinking how to spend it to the best advan-

tage, as you leave in a day or two. I thought at first we might try our luck with the birds together, but, on considering the matter, I find that one of us will be deprived of a portion of the pleasure, for both cannot work at the same time, as somebody must hold the team while the other shoots. Now this would be demanding too much from our patience, so I have decided to send over for my old friend Captain Blank, and ask him to join us for the day. If he comes—and I know he will if he is not too busy—I will take him as a partner, and we will try our skill against you and Lucy for a pair of gloves all round. We will have a team each, and as the dogs will follow Lucy and obey her, you are to have two and we'll take the other two. You may have your choice of the pointers or setters."

The plan being most pleasing to me, I accepted it in the promptest manner. Lucy's assent having also been received, an invitation to join us was dispatched by a mounted *vaquero*, or herder, to the Captain, and he returned, in the course of an hour, bearing an affirmative response. The preliminaries were then arranged, and it was decided that I should have the basket phaeton and pony belonging to Lucy, and the use of the pointers, while they were to have the double team and the setters. The parties were to separate after the first shot, each work its own ground, and reunite about noon at a certain point, to compare notes and partake of lunch. We were awake at an early hour the next morning, but we had scarcely descended to the breakfast-room before the Captain arrived on horseback, and being ushered in to the rendezvous, I was introduced. When that brief ceremony was over, we settled down to a discussion of ham and eggs, fragrant coffee, French rolls, and the sweetest of butter. While the matutinal meal was being disposed of, the event of the day became a matter of earnest discussion, and small wagers were joyously laid on the suc-

cess of each gun, the promptest bookmaker and most confident person being the sanguine young lady who was to act as my *cicerone.*

When breakfast was finished we entered the vehicles waiting for us at the door, and on taking our seats the dogs jumped to their places at our feet. We drove about five miles from the house, and on reaching a rolling stretch of prairie, which was one mass of grass, grain, and flowers as far as the eye could see, we set the dogs to work, to see if we had chosen a good locality for a commencement. As soon as they had stretched their legs and yawned once or twice, they began ranging, but they had not gone twenty yards away before one of the setters came to a point, and he had no sooner done so than the other three dogs backed him in the most beautiful manner. Their attitude was so statuesque and full of mobile gracefulness, that we stood looking at them for some seconds in admiration, for they presented as charming a canine picture as it was possible to conceive. It was only when the General asked who was to have the first shot, that we were recalled to the more practical work of the day. The query was answered by his fair daughter stating that, as the first bird brought luck, we should draw lots for the privilege of grassing it. This ceremony was very brief, as it consisted merely in giving the fingers the name of each person present—the names being known to two, to avoid any favoritism—and then having a third person touch one of the fingers and say, "This shoots." I was fortunate enough to be the party selected for opening the ball, and, marching up to the dogs, which held to their point as rigidly as if they were made of cast-iron, I flushed the bird, and brought it down within ten paces of the muzzle of the gun.

"First feather for us!" shouted a feminine voice behind me; "we are sure to beat you now."

I advanced to pick up the slain, but had not taken

three steps before an old cock rose out of the grass with a whirr that startled me, and rushed straight ahead; but he had not gone far before he came down with a loud thud, Lucy having bagged him.

"There is no doubt now that you will be shamefully beaten," said the enthusiastic young lady, as she gleefully clapped her hands for several seconds.

Having placed the dead birds in the phaeton, I was about to enter, when four shots in rapid succession caused me to wheel about just in time to see three birds come tumbling down amid a shower of feathers, and another swoop over the crest of a hillock as if it were badly hit.

"Oh, they are beating us!" exclaimed Miss Lucy in a tone of girlish disappointment, but the next moment she gave a scream of fear, for the double team, having become alarmed at the firing, and being under no control, dashed for the hillside at their best pace. Throwing down our weapons, the Captain and myself started in hot pursuit, and overtook them in less than two minutes, as one of the horses had been thrown by stepping into a prairie-dog hole. Before he could arise, owing to the kicking and splurging of the other, we had both of them by the reins, and the fallen one was soon on his legs. The only damage caused by this catastrophe was the breaking of the shaft, and giving the unlucky steed a good shaking, which made him tremble with excitement when he stood erect. The shaft was speedily mended with a stout piece of cord, and, everything being all right again, we resumed the sport which had been so inauspiciously interrupted. To prevent further accidents of that character, it was decided that one person should hold the team while the other shot, each to be driver in turn, and, to equalize the contest of the day, they wished Miss Lucy to agree that only one gun in each team should be engaged at a time, but

she refused to accept any such terms, and laughingly told them they were more concerned about giving the gloves than being beaten—a statement which elicited a smiling glance of feigned reproof from her father, and an astonished exclamation of "Oh, you awful!" while the Captain slyly intimated that she was so much afraid of anything like an equal contest that, woman-like, she held on to all the advantages she possessed.

"And quite right, too," was the response; "else how could woman keep the world in order? But I shan't argue the matter with you any further now, as I want some chickens for the surprise party to-night, and as you don't seem inclined to get them, we must; so, *au revoir.*"

Calling the pointers into the carriage, she turned the pony's head to the right, and giving him a light touch of the whip, put him into a fast trot. The last cry I heard as we were moving off was that of the General, who suggested to us not to run away with the lunch.

"Oh, won't it be delightful if we can beat them?" said my fair companion, with childish enthusiasm, when we were a short distance away, "as I do very much want to win those gloves from the Captain, and boast of having beaten papa and himself, for they consider themselves great shots. Our chances of beating them are good, as one of them must hold the team while the other shoots, whereas my pony will stand fire, and thus enable us to work untrammelled. I can therefore help you in securing any birds you wound, but would escape without a little more salting."

As she was kind enough not to intimate that I would miss a bird, I began a weak sort of examination relative to the Captain's prowess with the gun, and soon learned that he was not only formidable with that weapon, but also with Cupid's bow, for he had evidently deeply

pierced the heart of my merry companion, judging from her words and manner.

Having inferentially learned his position as a wooer in the course of ten or fifteen minutes, further information in that line was stopped by Miss Lucy's abrupt "Here we are! This is a splendid place for chickens. They rest here in the morning, and, when flushed, go for those cornfields on the ridge, where we will find them by-and-by, as soon as the sun gets hot." I alighted on hearing this, and the dogs being ordered out, the moment they touched the ground they commenced working in the most vigorous manner. They ranged wide, but lifted their heads every few moments and looked towards us, as if they were desirous of knowing what we thought of their movements, or whether we wished to give them fresh instructions.

A simple wave of the hand from their fair mistress sent them in whatever direction she wished, but, as they seemed to be working a blank, they were recalled by the whistle in about fifteen minutes, and sent to beat up a long, low, rolling ridge, or hillock, where the grass was rather short, owing to the profusion of creeping bushes. They had scarcely entered that quarter before they became wildly excited, and running rapidly onward, with noses well in the air, they came to such a sudden halt that they were almost bent into a semicircle, while their tails became as rigid as pokers, and their heads as motionless as lifeless skulls. I approached them to look for the birds, but, not seeing any, I advanced a pace or two further, when a whole brood rose within four or five yards of me, and so abruptly, that I took no aim hardly; yet I brought down two. The reports of my gun had hardly ceased when two more were heard, and on glancing round I saw that Miss Lucy had used the light weapon she carried in front of her in the phaeton, and bagged a bird, while she wounded another that escaped.

"What a pity you lost that one," I said, in a consolatory tone.

"It is not lost," was the answer. "It has gone towards the ridge, where we may find it, as I gave it a dose of No. 10, and it must be badly hit.

I had been using No. 8 shot, and thought it light enough for prairie chickens even at that season, so I suggested that she ought to try it, but she quietly said that No. 9 or 10 was heavy enough, as the birds were young, tardy in flushing, and laid well to the dogs; and as she seemed to know more about the matter than I did, I decided that I had been somewhat hasty in giving advice.

After the dogs had found the dead birds, she said she had marked down the flushed brood near the top of the ridge, but that it would be better to beat in the direction they had taken than to drive there rapidly, as the intervening space was, no doubt, well stocked with game. Acting on her suggestion, I followed the dogs in the carriage, and whenever they came to a point I stepped out, flushed the bird, and, owing to its tameness, generally bagged it, as its flight was rather slow and straight ahead, and it seldom rose until I was within a few feet of it. The veriest tyro could, of course, grass his chickens under such circumstances, for very few of them required the second barrel. The few birds that did not fall at the first shot were those which flew quartering, and received the iron hail in the posterior instead of the anterior part of the body, but only a small number of these escaped, owing to the closeness to which they allowed us to approach ere they took to flight. We worked the ground as far as the crest of a high ridge which was crowned by a cornfield, a distance of three or four miles, and shot nearly all the way, as the birds rose singly or in small packs, and flew only a few hundred yards before alighting again. It took us about two hours to go that distance, and when we halted near the maize field, about

eleven o'clock, we had bagged fifteen brace of birds. We had shot but few old males or matrons, so that nearly every one was fit for the table.

As it was time to look after our rivals, in order to compare notes and partake of lunch, Miss Lucy decided to drive round the cornfield while I went through it to the opposite side. As the dogs would not follow me, I was compelled to act as my own pointer, but this was an easy matter, for by stooping down amid the stalks and surveying my surroundings, I could see any birds within close range. I espied two or three small packs in this manner, but they were off before I could get near enough to use the gun, as my brushing against the stalks alarmed them. I was able to get two snap shots however, one of which I scored, but the second bird got off without a touch, I fancy, as I saw it flying high and strong as soon as the smoke cleared away. I did not get another chance to fire until I was near the edge of the field, when an old cock rose up almost from under my feet, but ere he could get fairly on the wing I shot at him, and caused him to tower high, and before he could resume his horizontal position somebody outside the field gave him a second barrel, which knocked small clouds of feathers out of him. He did not come down, however, until he received another round. On hastening out of the corn to see who had trenched on my rights, I saw my fair companion handling the dead bird, and on approaching her, she told me in a rather enthusiastic manner, that she had never seen a chicken tower so nicely. An examination of its wounds proved that it had been hit in the breast, neck, and lower mandible, by several pellets, and this was probably the reason it had soared so well, for I have noticed that birds shot near the head tower much more than those hit in the posterior parts.

Having bagged sixteen brace, we were rather anxious to meet the General and the Captain, to see how the

scores stood, as we anticipated being the victors; but as they were nowhere in sight, we concluded to go in search of them. After driving a couple of miles we emerged on a long rolling ridge, from whose crest we saw several carriages on the prairie below, and their occupants banging away at the birds whenever they had an opportunity. Several of the flushed coveys flew towards us and came so near that we bagged three of their number in less than ten minutes, and wounded a fourth, which escaped. Not being able to see the team of the gentlemen we sought, we decided to drive toward a white farm-house that gleamed amid a dense orchard, about a mile distant, to see if they had passed by there. On approaching it we saw the horses tied to the fence, and our rivals cosily seated under the shelter of the trees, and indulging in iced cider. We soon joined them, and, on comparing notes, learned that the keg of water which they had carried in the wagon had leaped out somewhere, presumably while they were trotting over rough ground, and that they had to give up shooting for the lack of that fluid which was so necessary to themselves and their dogs. They had only bagged nine brace of birds, and two of these they had given to the farmer for some water for the setters, so that they had only seven left. Miss Lucy, on hearing this, did not forget to boast of our good fortune, and to taunt them with their want of success; a condition of affairs which she attributed to their execrable shooting and ignorance of the haunts and habits of Prairie Chickens. The Captain was made a special target for her good-natured *persiflage*, and he was given to understand that one reason why women utilized every advantage they could was their ability to command advantages; an assertion to which he gave his assent in a modified form.

As luncheon was becoming a matter of importance, the edibles were brought forth, and a table, covered with

a snowy cloth, being laid in the orchard, we sat down to our *al fresco* repast with a keen sense of pleasure, and partook of it with that feeling of delight which comes from sharp appetites, pleasant company, and charming surroundings. When the heavier portion was disposed of, we plucked our dessert from the fruit trees that surrounded us, and capped the dinner climax by an indulgence in peaches, cream, and honey. After the dogs and horses had been fed and watered, we retired into the house and remained there until four P. M., then sallied forth to wage war anew on the innocent birds. We found them quite abundant, and managed to score so well that by the time we reached home, our opponents had twenty brace, while we had exactly twenty-six and a half. Although the shooting in the evening was not near so good as it had been in the morning, yet it was much pleasanter, for, the birds being scarcer, the dogs had to work harder, and it was then delightful to see how freely they ranged, how steadily they pointed, and how promptly they backed each other, and acted with the precision of machines. Few sights in the field are pleasanter than to see good Prairie Chicken dogs working together, as every point and back is made with automatic regularity, and the most high-mettled nervousness is toned down by training and experience into action, which, while spirited, is as steady as that of a veteran under fire.

After supper I was surprised to see half a dozen country wagons, which were filled with matrons, maids, and gallants, drive up to the door. As soon as the occupants alighted they were ushered into the parlor, but they had not had time to get seated ere Miss Lucy rushed in, and, before greeting one of them, burst into an exclamation of—

"Oh! girls, Mr. —— and myself beat papa and the Captain to-day by just thirteen chickens, and I've won a pair of gloves and some other presents from them."

This was followed by a series of explosions strongly suggestive of osculatory exercise, and afterwards by several an "How-d'-ye-do," which were evidently addressed to the masculine members of the company.

I was introduced to the strangers "all in a lump," soon after their arrival, and I then learned that they were the surprise party for whom the prairie fowl were so much wanted. They remained rather late, and spent the greater portion of the evening in dancing and singing, the instrumentalist in every instance being the fair Diana, who played as well as she shot and drove, while the automatic turner of the leaves of music was the Captain, who was as patient as he was assiduous, but whose only reward was severe criticisms of his awkwardness as a leaf-turner and a fowler. He received these with good-natured smiles, for their harmless purpose was evidently well understood. When the terpsichorean work of the evening was over, about midnight, the entire party sat down to a bounteous feast, in which prairie fowl formed the leading dish, and the manner in which they were shot and the ignominious defeat of our rivals the leading topic of conversation. When supper was finished the visitors wended their way homeward, and so ended St. Prairie Chicken Day in one of the most hospitable mansions in the State of Kansas. Miss Lucy, of course, received her wagers in due time, and, if events followed their natural order, she is now, in all probability, the honored spouse of Captain Blank, the State Senator for Blank County.

I have been out after pinnated grouse late in the season, when I could not bag more than two or three brace a day with heavy charges of No. 6 shot, and on more than one occasion I was glad to score a brace, for from November to January they are as wild as woodcock, and far more wary, as the least sound frequently routs them from covert, and sends them ten or twelve miles away be-

fore they stop. Persons who wish to try their skill and stamina would find this sort of shooting very interesting, but those who object to long marches and small bags would soon get tired of it. I recall several pleasant days spent in quest of the birds in company with some jolly fellows, but, with the exception of the incident mentioned, I do not remember one which had any special attractions, except the big bags secured occasionally, and hearty laughter at "dry" stories.

CHAPTER III.

THE SHARP-TAILED GROUSE.

Varieties of the Sharp-tailed Grouse—Appearance and color—Associates with prairie fowl—Great dancers—Ball-rooms—Opening of the dancing season—Grotesque evolutions—The nest and eggs—Faithful mothers—The young—How the mother protects them—Packing in winter—They lie well to dogs—Their habits when flushed—Roost in trees—Winter shooting—Where to seek for them—Their numbers and enemies—Unsuspicious early in the season—A day among the Sharp-tails in Idaho—The stubble-fields—The first volley—I am made a Jehu—An Indian hunting party—Good shots—Difference between war and hunting arrows—Dusky anglers—Spearing trout—How to cook fish—Dogs with "strong medicine"—An extraordinary shot with an arrow—Result of a day's sporting—Two thousand birds killed by six men in six weeks—Twelve brace in two hours—Difficulty of finding Sharp-tails without dogs—Best time for shooting them.

There are two varieties of the Sharp-tailed Grouse in the Northwest, but the difference between them is not very strongly marked. The more northern of the two (*Pediocetes* var. *phasianellus*) ranges from Lake Superior to the Arctic regions, and west as far as Alaska. This is blackish above, variegated with brownish-yellow; the scapulars have broad streaks of white; the markings beneath are dusky; the head and neck and the ground color are white; the throat has dusky spots; and the toes are as completely feathered as those of the ptarmigans. *Pediocetes* var. *columbianus,* whose habitat extends from Illinois on the east to the Cascade Range on the west, is paler than the preceding, and its legs and toes are less densely feathered, owing to the milder climate of the region in which it dwells. This variety is known as the spotted chicken, the white-belly, pin-tail, sprig-tail, and sharp-tail grouse in different localities. Its prevailing colors are a clear dusky-black above, and a pure white

beneath, variegated transversely above with zigzag spots of yellowish-brown; the head and neck are a deep buff; the throat is thickly spotted with dusk; and a V of the same hue is prominent on the breast. The tarsi are densely feathered, and the two long tail-feathers, which have given it the general name of sharp-tail, are very conspicuous. It derives its local name of spotted chicken from its numerous markings. It is about the size of the pinnated grouse, and its flesh is tender and well-flavored. The more southern variety associates freely with its prairie congener, and both seem to get along well together. During the winter the two species keep apart, however, for the sharp-tails burrow in the loose snow, if necessary, and work their way rapidly through it, and this the prairie-fowls cannot, or will not do, so far as my experience goes.

One of the most striking characteristics of the sharp-tails is their love of dancing, and the enthusiasm they display while engaged in it. None of the feathered creation can at all compete with them in the saltatorial art; they may therefore be acknowledged the champion terpsichoreans of the avi-fauna. They have also a decided advantage over all other lovers of the light, fantastic toe, and that is, that they can dance to their own music, and that it makes little difference to them whether the weather is wet or fine. Dancing is as much a ceremony of love with them as it is a religious rite with the Indians, and no true sharp-tail cock would think of choosing a mate without first showing her how gracefully he can glide through a grouse waltz, or with what a stately mien he can bear himself before his companions. No gallant would, in fact, think himself fit to wed unless he proved to his spouse that he was in every way capable of setting up as a dancing master, and a model to his prospective family. The terpsichorean evolutions of the sharp-tails commence in spring, when the males are ready to become

benedicts, and are prosecuted with the utmost enthusiasm while they last. Their first movement is to prepare an *al fresco* ball-room, and this they do by retiring to a spot where shrubbery grows, and trampling down the grass over an area of about twenty or thirty square feet.

When this is ready, the males frequent it every morning and evening for a fortnight or more, and indulge in the most grotesque dancing ever seen by human eyes. As soon as all are assembled, the females retire to one side to act as wall-flowers, and the males step into the ball-room with the easy assurance of ballet-dancers. They then ruffle up their neck feathers, elevate their tails, drop their rigid wings close to the ground, and, while keeping up a rapid vibrating or drumming sound with them, circle round and round each other in slow waltzing time, and though they look as if they were about to attack one another, yet they seldom, if ever, do so. They pass and repass each other, now to the right, then to the left; they stop to bow, then squat on the ground in the most ludicrous postures, and gaze intently at one another for a few moments. On arising, they assume the most stilted attitudes, as if they were overpowered with their own importance, and strut about with the self-conscious air of a drum-major. They move in couples and in fours, and when they wheel they frequently indulge in gentle clucking, as if they were complimenting each other on their graceful posing and knowledge of ball-room etiquette.

The figures of their dances are not unlike those of a minuet, or an old-fashioned Spanish *suelta*, but they are far more interesting, and, perhaps, a little more complex, for, though all go through the same motions, yet each couple goes through with them as it wishes, and acts independently of the others. The pace of the feathered terpsichoreans varies considerably, being sometimes fast and sometimes slow, but no matter what it may be,

they look and act as if the proper execution of the dance was the most serious work of their lives. As soon as a bird gets tired it jumps out, and gives a gentle cluck, which seems to signify that it has had enough and is delighted with the party. It acts as a spectator afterwards until it feels like renewing the amusement; but its time is not wasted, for it may be playing the gallant to the wall-flowers while resting. After the males have shown the hens their accomplishments, they select partners for the season, and devote the remainder of the year to rearing young waltzers. Their ball-rooms, which are called "chicken stamping grounds" by ranchers and hunters, may be readily recognized by the manner in which the grass is trampled down, and the numerous runways in the adjoining bushes. Some old hunters say that each flock returns to its favorite stamping ground year after year, if it has not been disturbed much by cattle, but this statement seems somewhat exaggerated, or at least only partially true.

The pinnated grouse have, it seems, the same predilection for the saltatorial art as their congeners, but there is this difference between their styles, according to a story told me by a very observant old granger, that the prairie fowl select an open ridge or knoll covered with short grass for their ball-room, and run over a large area, and, instead of pretending to fight, do so in reality. According to his tale they indulge in dancing both morning and evening, and desist only when hunger calls them away.

"I tell you what it is," he exclaimed, while relating their peculiarities, "they can leg the lancers better than you can, and better than some dancing masters, but perhaps they ain't so stylish about it."

The sharp-tail species builds its nest in a hollow in the ground, in the midst of a bunch of weeds, or in a tussock

of grass, and frequently under a bush. It is of very simple construction, being made of a few blades of coarse grass. The eggs, which vary in number from ten to fifteen, are greenish-white in color, with occasional dots of dark olive. The hen is one of the most faithful of mothers, for she will frequently stay on the eggs until she is nearly trodden upon, and sometimes until she is killed. When she hears footsteps approaching she lies very close, hoping to escape observation, and this she generally does, as she resembles the landscape in hue, and hugs the ground so closely that it requires a sharp pair of eyes to notice her form amid the grass. The young are able to run about and provide their own food soon after being hatched, but the hen seldom lets them go far away from her, as she keeps steadily calling to them with motherly clucks. If a person approaches the brood while they are roaming abroad, she sounds an immediate alarm, and when they rush for concealment she exposes herself freely to attract attention from them, until she thinks they are safe, when she darts away with a loud whirr, and remains away until the threatened or supposed danger is past, then rejoins them, and pours out endearments in numerous gentle clucks.

When the chickens are old enough to fly they resort to the undergrowth, and the shrubbery that fringe fields and streams, to feed on the snowberry and other fruits of which they are very fond. The chickens are exceedingly tame, and lie well to a dog; in fact they lie too well sometimes, as persons must give them headway before shooting, for fear of tearing them into shreds. When they alight after being flushed, they stand as motionless as statues, but on seeing their foe approach they squat so close to the ground that it is extremely difficult to see them, even though one should be within a few feet of them. A good dog is therefore requisite for finding them, and with such a staunch assistant they afford as

good sport as almost any of their family, for they fly rapidly and strongly, in a direct line.

When insects and berries are abundant in autumn, the birds are so fat that they are too lazy to rise before the dog, but in winter, when they have to live on willow and spruce buds, cedar berries, and other meagre pabulum, they are wild and flush at long distances, and with an alarmed cry of kuk-kuk, dart to the shelter of coppices or shrubbery, if any are in sight. They roost in trees, when they have the opportunity, during the winter, and often keep to their perches all day in very cold weather. On such occasions they take but little notice of the sportsman even when he brings some of them tumbling down; but this is not always the case, for as soon as they hear the report of a gun they will frequently dart away, only to alight again a few hundred yards further on. There is no more sport in shooting them in the trees at such times than there would be in bagging a lot of barn-yard fowl, but when they get on the wing the matter is different, and a person then feels a keen sense of pleasure on seeing them strike the ground with a resonant thud. Sharp-tails keep in families until the commencement of cold weather, then form into large packs, and remain together throughout the winter.

When this species takes wing, it rises with a loud and startling whirr until it reaches a certain altitude, and then flies straight ahead at a rapid rate. It can sail a long distance by merely expanding its wings, and when a large covey is in motion at the same time, this method of flight seems very graceful. When the birds settle, they commence cackling sociably to each other as soon as they are over their alarm, and sometimes continue it until long after dusk. In searching for them at any season of the year, a person may be almost sure of meeting them on broken ground, on the skirts of woods, and among the bushes that margin fields or streams. They

resort to the stubble-fields for food in the autumn and winter, and remain there all day, in cloudy weather, but they only visit them each morning and evening when the sun is bright and warm, the remainder of the day being passed in the shade.

They are so numerous in some of the regions beyond the Rocky Mountains that a person may easily bag twenty or thirty brace a day, if he is armed with a breech-loader and accompanied by a steady dog. They are trapped, like the prairie-chickens, by pot and market hunters, and are shipped to the Eastern cities in such extensive quantities as to lead a person to infer that they will be extinct in a few years. If it is true that they will not live in close vicinity to man, their extinction is only a matter of time, unless some efforts are made to preserve them in places where they may be comparatively safe from his intrusion. They will be abundant enough during the present generation, however, as they have a vast empire, well-stocked with food, in which to roam, and they suffer but little from the severity of the weather. I have seen flocks, which competent judges estimated to number a thousand at least, as early as November and as late as February, but after the latter month they break up, preparatory to mating. They do not separate in the more northern regions before April, so that the broods are not fit to be shot before the middle or the last of September.

Old and young are so unsuspicious in the early part of autumn that they will allow the sportsman to approach exceedingly close before they attempt to flee; even when shot at several times they seem loth to take to the wing, and depend on skulking and running as the principal means of escape. They are not unlike the prairie-fowl in their habit of roosting, for they seek shelter at night in the tallest grass, and leave it early in the morning for more open spaces, except when the hens are accompanied

by their broods, as these always keep under cover as much as possible, to avoid the prying eyes of their enemies. They are readily found, however, with the aid of a good dog, as they exhale a strong scent, lie well to a point, and do not scatter so easily as other members of the family. They, therefore, afford capital sport, and their flesh being white, tender, and palatable, they are entitled to the respect of the naturalist, the sportsman, and the epicure.

One of the best day's sport I ever had with them was in Eastern Idaho, where they are very abundant. I was in the company of three gentlemen, who were true lovers of the gun, for the excitement of camping out, the communion with nature, and the health-giving tramping over mountain and moor, was more pleasant to them than the mere killing of birds. Leaving town in a wagon drawn by two sturdy and high-spirited mustangs, we drove until we came to some stubble-fields. Alighting there, we tied the team to the fence, called out the dogs, and sent them into the fields, for my companions believed it would be no use beating up the ground outside, as they said that the birds always flew into wheat-fields, so that they could not be trailed by a dog, whereas the prairie-chicken travelled to such places on foot. I was the only one in the party who carried a breech-loader, the others preferring their reliable friends, the muzzle-loaders, on the ground that they could fire any kind of shot they pleased from them during the day, according as it was wanted, without being compelled to carry a heavy load of different kinds of cartridges. The man who supplied me with shells filled them with three and a half drachms of coarse powder, and one and one-fourth ounces of No. 8 shot, as he said that I might meet some hard-killing birds, and the extra eighth of an ounce of shot would be sufficient to bag them clean at any distance inside seventy-five yards.

Our experienced dogs dashed for the light thickets that fringed the stubble-field as soon as they got over the fence, and they had scarcely entered them before a brood was pointed in admirable style. One of the company then advanced and flushed the birds, and when they rose, with a loud and startling whirr, eight barrels belched shot among them, and brought several to the ground with such force that some of them made a ricochet, while the clouds of feathers which floated in the air proved what havoc had been committed among them. After picking up the dead and wounded we found that the volley had brought us four brace, and that we had bagged about two-thirds of the covey. This result was due to the close manner in which they rose, and the fact that all flew in the same direction. When these were placed in the wagon, we resumed operations, but, instead of moving in a body, we divided into couples and took opposite routes, with the understanding that we were to meet for lunch at a stream about four miles distant. After leaving the others, my companion and myself flushed a brood which were following the mother, bagged five of them, and subsequently found two more, which were badly wounded. As it was evident that the birds were unusually numerous, we decided to rejoin our comrades and see if they would draw lots as to who should drive the wagon, for it was apparent that, if we killed as rapidly as we had done, we should either have to leave our trophies behind us, owing to their weight, with a possibility of not finding them again, or put them in the vehicle when they were shot. A loud halloo was therefore given, and this caused our companions to halt, to learn its import. On rejoining them our idea was explained, and was acted upon immediately. Lots were drawn as to who should drive the team, and the result was that I was relegated to the position of Jehu, much to my disappointment, as I was

more anxious to note the habits of the birds than to bag them. On seizing the reins, I followed the gunners very slowly, and received their birds from time to time. They offered to "spell" me after a while, but as I did not wish to spoil their sport, I decided to occupy my exalted position until we reached the stream, and then relinquish it to another. While crawling tediously along, I kept my eyes on the ground a good deal, as it was generously covered with bunch-grass, amid which glided an occasional snake or lizard, whose movements were very interesting to me. I fell into such a dull, listless mood after a while that I scarcely saw anything except the mere earth, but on reaching a small piece of shrubbery, I was roused into attention by the gaze of a liquid pair of brown eyes. Not being able, at first, to make out what they belonged to, I halted, and stared steadily at them for a few moments, and then noticed that they were attached to a grayish body, which resembled the ground so much that it was hard to distinguish them apart. After a little further peering, I noticed several more pairs of the same kind of eyes, and as they were scarcely twenty feet away, I decided to try my pocket-revolver on them. Drawing that carefully and slowly, for fear of making any movement that would disturb the gazers, I fired at a glistening pair of eyes, and the report had no sooner rung out than a large flock of sharp-tails rose up and fled at their highest speed, and with many an alarmed cry of kuk-kuk-kuk, to safer quarters.

I shot at them with my gun when they were fairly on the wing, and brought down two. This simple feat gave me much pleasure, for I would rather have bagged that brace under the circumstances I did than several at another time. After picking them up, I went searching for the one I had shot at with the revolver, but I could not find it. Resuming the reins, I drove slowly, in order to keep behind the gunners and receive their victims,

which were brought in fast enough to suit the most insatiable destroyer. I was so much interested in watching, when I was not otherwise engaged, a party of Indians who were shooting field mice, ground squirrels, and sage hares, with arrows, that time fled heedlessly by. These red hunters brought the squirrels to the mouths of their burrows by chirping, and the moment they appeared the keen-headed arrow was sent twanging through their skulls or bodies, so that they could not retreat, even if they were only wounded, owing to the length of the shaft. Some of the braves were so expert with their rude weapons that they transfixed a terrified little field mouse on an arrow almost as readily as if it were a buffalo; and I saw a youth bring down a curlew with as much ease as if he had used a shot-gun. These hunting arrows differ from the war arrows in being narrower at the base and quite round, in order to enable persons to pull them out of the flesh quite easily; but the others are broad and square at the same point, so as to render it impossible to withdraw them without causing much pain, or making the wound larger. I reached the river about noon, and there halted, as I wished to watch the actions of some dusky anglers, who were pulling salmon trout out of the water. These splendid specimens of the streams were caught in baskets which had large mouths and narrow ends, so that any fish entering them could not escape unless it backed out, and this it could not do, owing to the force of the current. As fast as a trout was caught it was knocked on the head with a short club, and thrown in a pile with others, unless a squaw or a child took it away. While some were capturing fish in this manner, others were angling for them with the hook and line and the worms found on the wild sage, and catching them freely, too, as they seemed ready to rise to anything, from a "gentle" to a bit of red cloth. The boys were as busily engaged as the adults, but their favorite mode of fishing was with a

spear, which they used in the most dexterous manner. While I was absorbed in watching these unique systems of angling, I heard a voice behind cry out:

"Hallo! have you joined the *Siwashes* (Indians) without telling us a word about it?"

On turning round I saw my companions, who were laden with birds, smiling at my apparent interest in the work of the red men, and when I replied that I had become "a good Injun," one said they would take the team away, as they did not want the horses subjected to the influences of the camp, nor to *Siwash* character.

When I asked what the matter was, they said that if I would desert my adopted people and rejoin them they would tell me. I assented to this, so they threw their loads of feathers into the wagon and drove to a charming spot amidst a coppice, on the bank of the river, where we rested for lunch. A fire was soon lighted, and half a dozen of the birds having been drawn and plucked, they were hung before the blaze on improvised spits made of willow wands. It was then suggested that we should catch some trout, and this idea being favorably received, one of the party said he would go and borrow a spear from the Indians. I asked why we could not buy two or three trout, instead of waiting to spear them, and was told that the whole band of savages was troubled with a malignant form of the "Scotch fiddle," and that it would be dangerous to touch anything they handled, as white persons were susceptible to the disease, and found it exceedingly difficult to cure. That explanation was sufficient, for I almost felt as if I had it myself, as I had shaken hands with a venerable old relic who had extended his fingers on seeing me, although I had never before gazed on his features.

The gentleman who had gone for the spear returned in a short time and set to work with such determination that he captured half a dozen splendid trout, weighing

from one to three pounds, in about forty minutes. These were wrapped up in nearly two inches of moistened clay and thrown into the middle of the fire, and as the clay hardened almost immediately, the fish began to bake through and through in this improvised oven. They were left in the fire until the birds were ready, and then poked out with a stick. The clay was next moistened with water, and on being stuck with a ramrod it separated and took the fish skins with it, leaving the trout whole, and with all their juices retained, so that they made a most delicious dish. They were then cleaned and sprinkled with salt, and being placed on dishes made of poplar leaves, they divided the honors of the feast with the young grouse.

Having partaken of our lunch, we resumed operations by beating a thin fringe of shrubbery which margined the river. We found this an excellent place, for the birds were abundant there, and nearly every shot of ours counted. The reports of our guns brought some of the Indians to see us after awhile, and the surprise they expressed at the way in which the dogs worked was most pleasing to their owners. One warrior said they must have "very strong medicine" to be able to find birds so readily, and he looked as though he would like to have them to eat, in hopes of getting their "good medicine" transplanted to himself. The dogs ranged and backed each other so well that it would have afforded pleasure to any one to see them at work, let alone untutored savages.

When they came to a point one time, I advanced and flushed a grouse, and as it rose I gave it the right barrel, but I only succeeded in knocking a cloud of feathers out of it. I then tried the left, and found it was empty. Not caring to lose the bird, I shouted impulsively to an Indian who stood near me to shoot at it, as he had a bow and arrow in his hand. He complied,

and, quick as thought, sent his arrow twanging through the air. I watched to see how near it would come to the object aimed at, and was surprised to see it strike the bird and bring it down headlong. I looked sharply at the warrior to note if he displayed any exultation at making such a shot, but I could detect none, as his face was as stolid as a piece of stone. Being desirous of knowing the distance at which such an extraordinary shot was made, I asked the savage to go for his arrow and stand there, and when he announced that he had found it, I walked towards it, and concluded, as near as I could measure by paces, that he had hit a fast-flying bird at a distance of fifty yards.

This seemed so remarkable to me that I subsequently made inquiries to learn if Indians were, as a rule, so proficient with the bow, and from all I heard I should decide that they were not, and that the shot was purely accidental. I should fancy this was the case on another ground also, and that was the disinclination of the warrior to sell the arrow, on account of, as I afterwards learned, its "medicine" power, as he supposed it was unusually fortunate. I gave him the bird he had killed as a souvenir of the occasion, and he took it with as much eagerness as I ever saw an Indian display. When he left us we resumed work and trudged all day through stubble-fields, along the margins of wooded streams and ravines, and over broken ground, where we knew the birds were to be found, and when we returned homeward in the evening we found we had killed one hundred sharp-tails, or an average of ten brace to each gun.

This was by no means an unusually large bag, however, for I heard of instances where it was more than doubled; and a man was pointed out to me who was known to have killed two thousand birds in a few weeks—if I remember rightly it was six weeks—but then he traversed a moderate section of country in search of them. I have

bagged twelve brace in about three hours in Montana, without the aid of a dog, and I could have done much better if I wished. The number that can be killed when the birds "pack" can only be estimated; and during cold weather, when they are loth to leave their perches, the veriest tyro can shoot them down with as little trouble as he would so many domestic fowl.

Bagging them in this manner does not, of course, come under the head of sport, no matter how pleasant it may be to the market or pot hunter. I have been out after sharp-tails, late in the autumn or early in winter, when my bag for the day did not amount to more than a brace or two; and I have known others, who knew their haunts very well, and who therefore ought to be more successful, tell the same story, so that they cannot always be slaughtered in large numbers. They are, on the whole, comparatively easy to kill in the early part of the season; but, later on, they are wild and shy, and flush at such long distances that it requires a good ten-bore gun and a heavy charge of No. 6 shot to bring them down.

Dogs are almost a necessity for pursuing them with any degree of success, owing to their color, and the habit they have of lying close. A person may be in the midst of a brood, and yet not detect them, although he may be looking directly at them. Their liquid brown eyes chiefly betray them, for they stare at the intruder with an expression of fear, caution, and suspicion. They seem to say, as well as looks can express it, "I wonder if he sees me; I'll keep still for fear he might, as I know that is my only safety." They appear to have an intuitive feeling that their hue is their best protection against enemies, and that humility is safer than daring and defiance. I have wandered about among families without flushing them, by moving slowly, and have been amused at the way in which they would squat on seeing me, and turn one of their bright brown eyes cunningly upwards,

as if trying to look out of the corners. When they are engaged in their dances they stop suddenly the moment they detect a man, and squat close to the ground, but if he does not disturb them they resume their amusement as soon as they recover from their fear, and continue it until they are tired. The usual charge of powder and shot employed for bagging them is three and a half drachms of powder and one and one-eighth ounces of No. 8 shot; but, later in the season, some persons increase the powder half a drachm, and the shot one-eighth of an ounce. No. 6 is preferable to No. 8 at that time. The latter end of September is about the best time for shooting them for pleasure, as they are strong on the wing, not too shy, and the weather is cool enough to brace both men and dogs for their work.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CANADA GROUSE.

The Canadian grouse, or spruce partridge—Size, weight and color—Its northern range—The Franklin variety—Large numbers killed with sticks—Caught with nooses placed on the end of a pole—Their food in winter—Flavor of the flesh—Tameness of the Franklin variety—Dust baths—Lie well to a point—Their fearlessness—Look like knobs on a tree—A grouse dog—No sport—Nests—Chicks—Habit of skulking and running—Breeding in confinement—Haunts of the grouse—Bachelor parties—System of wooing—Noise produced by wings—Theory of Maret—A misleading voice—Temptation—An early start—A red terrier—A country hotel—A game of billiards and a group of critics—An Indian encampment—Securing a guide—Our camp—Among the grouse—Majestic scenery—Death of a forest giant—An Indian graveyard—Killing a fawn—How to "tote" deer—Heavy loads—Forest cookery—How Indians look upon graveyards—Sudden disappearance of our red guide—Electing a camp cook—Bears, wolves, and beavers—A mysterious thief—A storm in the forest—Destruction of our camp—Homeward bound—A piece of news—Abundance of grouse.

The Canada grouse, or spruce partridge (*Canace Canadensis*) has a tail of sixteen broad rounded feathers, and a reddish-yellow strip of naked skin over the eye. It has no inflatable air sacs nor tufts of peculiar feathers on the neck. The prevailing hue of the plumage is blackish, marked below with streaks and bars of white, and undulated above with dark gray. The throat has a whitish border; and a broad band of orange-brown extends across the extremities of the tail feathers. The female is barred with black, brown and buff, and some gray above. The male has a length of sixteen inches, and frequently attains a weight of two pounds. This species ranges as far north as 70°, but it is supplanted in the regions adjoining the Pacific Ocean by the Franklin variety,

which differs from it only in having the tail feathers entirely black, being devoid of the broad terminal bar of orange on the tail, and having the upper tail coverts, which are all black in *Canadensis,* tipped with white.

With the exception of this slight difference, both varieties are alike in habits and make the vast and silent forests their homes. The Franklin variety is so highly prized by the Indians of Oregon and Washington Territory that they call it the *Tyee Kulla-Kulla,* or chief bird, for they consider it to have no peer, judged from a gastronomical point of view. Being exceedingly tame and unsuspicious, large numbers of this bird are destroyed by the red men by simply knocking them down with a stick, or shooting them from their perches; and if they wish to capture them alive they merely put a noose on the end of a long pole and slip it over their heads. Their flesh is not very palatable in winter, owing to the character of their food, which is mainly composed of fir and spruce buds, as these give it an acrid taste. This flavor is much appreciated by some persons, however, as they consider it rather "gamey"—the very thing most desired in wild birds. The Franklin variety is the commonest member of its sub-family in the spruce forests along the shores of the Northern Pacific Ocean, and so abundant is it in August and September that a person may easily bag fifteen or twenty brace in a day. I do not know of any wild bird that has so little fear of man, except one, for the mothers, even when their chicks are with them, will run ahead of him for some distance, and, when alarmed, merely jump into the first bushes they meet. I have occasionally shot them in September and October with a revolver, and also killed one with a stick or a stone. Their tameness is, in fact, almost stupid, for even when shot at they will not always rise; and when they do, they may merely fly to the first convenient tree, where all can be bagged, if the lower are brought down first.

CANADA GROUSE.

They may be met with on all the paths and roads leading through the forests, as they are fond of frequenting such places for the purpose of picking up any grain left by horses, and revelling in dust-baths. When a pack is engaged in this latter amusement, it is surrounded by clouds of dust, for each works away with a will, and clucks its sense of enjoyment as it forces its body through the light, loose soil, and scatters it in showers over the back. If they are disturbed while taking a bath, they, like all the gallinaceous tribe, rise with a loud whirr that is not unlike the sound of a whirlwind, but at other times they merely walk into the shrubbery, and return to their bath as soon as the cause of their alarm has passed on. They lie well to a dog, and, when treed, may stand a dozen shots before they attempt to seek safer quarters. They do not squat on the branches, but stand erect, and peer vigilantly from side to side; yet, so closely do they resemble the foliage, that one might mistake them for knots on the boughs, even when they are not very high up.

Their bravery, so far as standing fire is concerned, is proverbial, for they pay no attention to the leaden hail, unless it should bring some of the uppermost tumbling down, and then all fly away with a startling whirr, and give the sportsman an opportunity of bagging a few on the wing. The great difficulty, however, is to rout them, for they will often stand firing until every one in the tree is killed. I have frequently tried to scare them into flight by shouting, and pelting them with stones, but without avail, so I had to pick them off or do without them.

A very good dog for working them up on the ground is a rough-coated red terrier, trained to their pursuit, for as soon as it sees them it gives tongue, and following them to their place of refuge, keeps barking about it until the hunter arrives, when he may easily bag them,

for they pay little or no attention to him, all their interest being centered in the yelping creature below, even when some of their companions come crashing and tumbling to the ground. Their tameness, or stupidity, may be inferred from the fact that I have known an Indian to kill fifteen brace in a day with his bow and arrow, and another to bag twelve brace in an hour with an old Hudson Bay musket. To shoot them on their perches is really no sport, in the higher sense of the word, and were it not for the delicacy of their flesh, few persons would care to pursue them as a pastime.

This species, like all its family, builds its nest on the ground, the materials of which it is made being dry twigs, leaves, and mosses. The eggs, which number from ten to eighteen, are a deep fawn color, sprinkled with various shades of brown. During the incubating period, the hens carefully avoid the males, and cling so tenaciously to their nests that they sometimes permit themselves to be made prisoners rather than desert them. The young are able to follow the mother as soon as they leave the nest, and are large enough to be shot about the middle of August or the first of September. They lie so well then that they will permit a dog to approach them to within a distance of six or seven feet, and when he points they generally crouch on the ground; yet, they sometimes attempt to escape by running and skulking.

When flushed, they dart away in a straight line, and, though they fly rapidly, yet it is rather an easy matter to bag them, even in the dense forests. This species, it seems to me, would thrive in any country where coppices or forests are sufficiently numerous or extensive to afford it the shelter and privacy it requires; and it could evidently be made as domestic, if not more so, than the pheasant, as it has been known to breed and thrive in confinement. Everything connected with it would lead a person to infer that none of its family is better

adapted for prospering in a wooded country; and as its flesh, though dark, is as tender and succulent as that of any of its genus, it would apparently pay sportsmen to stock forests with it.

The Indians of the Far West say that this species may always be found in lowlands and along the courses of streams and ravines, while the ruffed grouse is a denizen of the uplands and the lower ranges of hills. The western is not so much attached to swampy places as its eastern congener, its favorite resorts being dry and sloping land; sand "barrens" which produce the fir, spruce, and pine; and those openings where second-growth timber prevails. It is a great skulker in cover, but if it is detected on open ground by a dog, it will attempt to escape by running, and only take to the wing as a last resource. The males are quite fleet of foot after the wooing season is over, as they are thin and active, and so wary that it is difficult to approach them. When flushed, they utter a few loud clucks and dart away suddenly, but they do not fly far before settling on a tree or in low shrubbery. They moult in July, and during the entire period that they are shedding their feathers, they remain as closely concealed as possible, to avoid their numerous enemies. They keep in parties by themselves from the time the hens commence laying until they are joined by the young broods, late in the autumn. They win their mates as the other members of their family do, by displaying their forms, fighting, and calling or drumming. They rise spirally in the air at intervals, and produce a drumming sound, not unlike that of the snipe in the same situation, but it is more metallic in tone. This is louder when they are descending than at any other time, as the wings, which are then placed at an acute angle with the body, vibrate slightly and with a tremulous motion, and the tail is spread out to its fullest extent and turned over the back. If the theory of Maret is correct, it is an easy matter

to account for this peculiar sound, for, according to his idea, in this form of flight the webs of each stiffened feathers of the pinions are set obliquely, and the filaments acting like taut harp strings, the air current produced in falling plays upon them so effectively as to produce a metallic resonance. These birds do not jerk their tails like their congeners, the ruffed grouse, and do not burrow in the snow, but keep in trees throughout the winter, except in those regions where snow is rarely seen, and there they never change their habits, owing to the comparative abundance of food, and the mildness of the climate.

I have spent many an hour in quest of the dusky grouse in the dense forests of the Far West, but the best bag that I ever made in a day was sixteen brace, and the majority of these were shot from the tops of towering firs and spruces. How I came to be so unusually successful might as well be related in full, as it had features which were quite pleasant and the reverse. The first intimation that I had of my good fortune was an invitation from a party of four gentlemen to join them on a "shoot" for a week or more in the woods, it being their intention to camp out all the time, in order to be both able to commune with Nature and to kill game. I did not feel at the time as if I could accept the invitation, owing to the fact that more pressing matters required my attention; but after arguing the case with myself for two hours or more, I finally decided to accompany them, though somewhat against my better judgment. Had I had a friend to tie me in my room, as Ulysses of old was tied to the mast by his followers, in order that he might not be lured away by the songs of the sirens when he was passing the enchanted island, I might have resisted the temptation presented to me, but not having one, and the flesh being weak, I concluded to follow my weakness.

Having sent a note to that effect, the party called at

an unearthly hour the next morning, and by dint of shaking, howling, and asking me if I were dead, managed to rouse me, and finally succeeded in getting me into a large wagon, having room enough to hold six persons, besides tents, dogs, guns, and ammunition. Our kennel consisted of a single terrier, but what use he could be was beyond my ken, as I understood we were to slaughter everything in the form of game that we should meet in our rambles. Not being in a mood to be inquisitive, however, I made no inquiries, and devoted most of my attention to watching the reddish-yellow dog and to nodding at him occasionally with closed eyes. This habit of mine became so chronic after awhile that the companion who sat beside me said I was the politest man he ever knew, as I had bowed most humbly to every man, bird, beast, and tree we had met on the road. When the sun became hot, however, I was roused into an active condition, and after breakfasting at a wayside hotel, I felt as lively as a cricket.

Leaving the inn, we travelled until two P. M., and then halted in the outskirts of a ramshackle hamlet to make inquiries about the best shooting quarters in the vicinity, and the probability of securing an Indian guide who knew the country well, and could make himself useful as a general utility man in camp. Having left one of our party in charge of the team, we started for the village, and on learning that it boasted a hotel, we marched towards it, and plied the landlord with all sorts of questions bearing on our mission. He answered them readily, and gave us to understand that if we would wait until evening he would procure us the best guide in the country at a dollar a day and his "grub."

Having decided to postpone our journey on condition that he had his man ready by seven o'clock, the team was driven into town, and after the horses were put in a stable, we cast about for something to do to kill time.

We might have read the newspapers if there had been any in the house, but there were none, except an old copy of the "Blank City Screamer," which was almost solely devoted to abusing the opposition paper and the party it advocated, or to giving local scraps of news which had no interest for anybody on earth, or out of it, except the local Smiths and Browns.

While we were discussing what to do, the landlord said we might, perhaps, like to play a game of billiards.

"The very thing," said one of our party; "where is your table?"

"In the back room."

"Is it fit to play on?"

"Well, it ought to be; I paid forty dollars for it."

"Bravo! This is fortunate; we won't die of ennui while that's in the house, anyway."

"I'll show it to you, gentlemen, and you can judge for yourselves if it ain't first-class."

"All right; go ahead." We then followed him in a bunch into a dingy back room, whose windows were almost opaque with dirt. The table was certainly a first-class one, so far as size was concerned, for it occupied nearly the whole of the room, and boasted six pockets, whose orifices were as capacious as the mouth of a stump orator, while it looked as if it had been built in the red sandstone period, and had experienced many a rough knock in its long life.

As grumbling at its appearance could not mend matters, we were content to smile at it, and guess at its age, but we could not apparently come within a million years of that, for while one said it belonged to the Mesozoic Age, others insisted that it could not be more than three or four million years old, or that it was a pre-Adamite production. Not being able to agree on this point, we decided to play a four-handed game, the fifth member being placed near the middle to keep count, so that he

would not tire out too soon in travelling. We played away, hour after hour, but could not tell which side won, as the balls were so accustomed to move at eccentric angles, that no amount of science could make them go in another, and they generally finished their course by going into the pockets, so that if we, by chance, made a count, it was taken off the next moment. This was rather humiliating, as we were desirous of showing the loungers of Blanktown, who crowded into the room to gaze on us, what excellent billiardists we were, but we did not seem to succeed very well, for one old fellow, whose attire chiefly consisted of a ragged straw hat, hinted aloud that we ought to pocket ourselves. We played until five o'clock, and then ceased through irritated exhaustion. On entering the outer room the auditors followed us *en masse*, and began plying us with all sorts of questions about our business, where we were going, what we were doing, and how long we intended to stay in the neighborhood. The answers they received were more witty than truthful, but instead of showing anger at them, they caught their spirit immediately, and all were soon "yarning" away, the landlord leading. The battle of Hungry Hill, where the Indians were defeated by the pioneers, was the great theme of conversation, and as some of those present "fit into it," they grew eloquent as they described the gory scene. One of our party said he would keep tally and see how many times the story was told, and when he summed up, he found it had been repeated fifteen times, the only addition made to it from time to time, being an account of a war dance, scalping, and how they "swamped the Injuns with a bagnet charge."

The landlord had more to tell about this than any man present, although he knew nothing concerning it personally. This irritated a native of the Green Isle to such an extent, that he told the Boniface that it was a

pity that he had not adopted novel writing as a profession, as he was evidently a better novelist than a hotel-keeper. This sally evoked so much laughter that we were surprised at it, until we subsequently heard that the man was famous for his penuriousness, and the dirty character of his house. We wandered about the town until seven o'clock, then returned to the hotel and asked for our guide, and were told that he could not come until the next morning. Not caring to lose any more time, we hitched up our horses, as we intended to reach a camping ground in the forest by ten o'clock. The Boniface urged us to remain all night, and finding that we would not, he charged us a nice round sum for the honor of knowing him. The bill was paid without protest, but one of the party took the opportunity of telling him what he thought of his character; but he might as well have bayed the moon as talk to him, so far as wounding his feelings was concerned, for he had none except those which referred to money. We drove away from the hamlet at a rapid trot, and were soon speeding towards a farm-house about five or six miles distant, where we were told we might find a guide. We missed the road, however, and by ten o'clock found ourselves following a regular cow-path through the forest.

Knowing that we had lost our way, we halted, took out our blankets, picketed the horses, and having lit a fire, were about sitting down when we were startled by the barking of some curs. Thinking there might be a pioneer's shanty near us, we seized our guns, and started in the direction of the barking, but the dogs receded as fast as we advanced, until we suddenly found ourselves in a small Indian encampment, which seemed to swarm with snarling curs, and terrified babies. Some of the braves advanced to meet us, and greeted us with a cheery "Cla-how-ya," a salutation which we cordially returned.

It was evident by their dress and looks that we had disturbed their repose, for they appeared as if they had jumped hurriedly out of bed, and were delighted to find that their visitors were nothing more dangerous than a small party of wandering whites. We gave them to understand that we were out after game, and asked if any was to be found in that region, and one, who seemed to be the spokesman, replied: "heap, heap." Having said this, which he thought was enough, all returned to their *wickiups*, like so many dusky spectres, and we wended our way back to the fire. After a quiet smoke, we rolled ourselves up in our blankets, pointed our feet towards the fire, and gave ourselves over to the god of sleep. We were awake before dawn, and had breakfast stowed away before the first glimmering of light appeared in the eastern horizon. We had scarcely partaken of it before some of the red men called on us to beg for tobacco, but as we did not like to give to one without giving to all, we refused them point blank, though we promised to give half a pound of "plug" and a dollar a day to any one of them who would act as a guide.

A strapping young fellow stepped forward on hearing this, and as he spoke some English, and understood more, we accepted his services. At his suggestion we hitched up the team and drove five miles further on, until we were within hearing of the hoarse roar of the sea, and there halted under the lee of a high bank, and in the midst of a forest of gigantic firs and spruces, whose tops seemed to kiss the clouds, while they were so dense that we could not see forty yards ahead in some places. It did not take us long to put up our tent, though there was much discussion as to which side the door ought to face; and one man was taunted for being so dead in love with the poles that he would not move away from them. The same individual afterwards displayed as much fear of going near the water as a dog suffering from hydropho-

bia, especially if it were any distance away; but he had no objection to it when it was in camp. Having cut some branchlets of cedar, spruce, fir, and other trees, we made a thick, soft, and fragrant bed for ourselves in the further part of the tent, and then sat down to revel in the majestic sylvan scenery which environed us. Few men who are at all impressible could gaze on the landscape that surrounded us without being elevated by it, and having their thoughts raised above the more sordid feelings of life.

It makes man better, it seems to me, to be alone sometimes with wild, primeval nature, for it softens the heart, ennobles the mind, and causes him to look more kindly upon the errors of his fellow-creatures. There is something so exalting and majestic in grand scenery, especially if it is softened by sylvan beauty, that a person sympathizes keenly with the poet who wrote

> "There is a pleasure in the pathless wood,
> There is a rapture on the lonely shore;
> There is society where none intrude,
> By the deep sea, and music of its roar."

I was so buoyant at the time that I felt like repeating the lines aloud, but as it was evident that all were contemplating the scene with a profound enjoyment, I restrained my impulses, and gave myself up to a placid and pleasurable meditation, which was not disturbed by any sound for fifteen or twenty minutes. Having filled my mind with the delights of the scene, I proposed that we should go to work at once, as it was nearly ten o'clock, and the suggestion proving acceptable, each person began giving his opinion about the kind of game we ought to pursue. After all had been heard, it was decided that we should travel in pairs, and that some should go after birds, and others after deer, in order to make our repasts as varied as possible. I accompanied the owner of the terrier, as it was our duty to supply the feathered game

that day. The red man accompanied the Nimrod of the expedition, whose idea was to attack nothing of less importance than a bear, and as the animal was abundant enough in the country, we surmised that he would not come home without one, unless bruin took him home.

When we left camp we took our bearings in the most careful manner, for fear of getting lost, for a trackless forest looks so much alike that even the most experienced backwoodsman would not recognize one part from another, except by some special marks which he impresses on his mind, and from which he shapes his course.

I learned the use of the terrier soon after starting, for we had hardly entered the depths of the forest before he dashed away, and a minute later we heard his sharp and vehement barking. "Grouse," exclaimed my companion, as he ran ahead, and I after him. We had little difficulty in finding the dog, as he kept up a steady series of yelps, which expressed as plainly as yelps could: "Here they are; I've got them." When we espied him he was wildly waltzing around a tree, looking upwards, and giving tongue in the most excited manner. We peered among the branches for a minute or more, but beheld nothing except what seemed to be knots on the branches. Knowing that the birds were in the tree, nevertheless, I fired at what seemed to be a knot on a branch about sixty feet above me, for the purpose of making the fugitives reveal themselves, but my surprise may be imagined when a splendid male of the Franklin variety of the Canada grouse came tumbling down as dead as a door nail. As soon as he touched the ground the terrier began to mouth him, and to bark violently, as if he were delighted with the capture. My companion fired at another supposed knot, and bagged a hen, evidently a mother. This induced us to fire at any prominent protuberance we saw, and we were rewarded for our labor by bagging four brace before the

remainder of the pack sought safer quarters. They had no sooner started, however, than the terrier pursued them, and kept barking all the way until he got beyond our hearing.

Picking up the dead birds, we went after the dog, as we knew he would not stop until he flushed another brood or saw those started alight, but we had not proceeded fifty yards before we came upon a mother and her nearly full-grown brood. We tried to make them rise by firing sticks and stones at them, but our efforts proved unavailing, for they kept running ahead of us and clucking occasionally, or trying to hide in the undergrowth. We finally dashed in among them, and, flushing them, fired a volley, which gave us two brace and a half. Having shouldered the birds, we trudged onward through masses of matted briers, broken branches, and fallen leaves, which seemed to be far more numerous than ever they were at Vallambrosa, until we came to a beautiful meadow, which was covered with a most luxuriant growth of grass and wild flowers, and surrounded by gigantic firs and spruces, so that it resembled an artificial park. In looking over this, we obtained a vista of the Pacific Ocean through a magnificent avenue of trees, and could hear its rumbling and hissing as the huge billows surged shoreward, and its dirge-like cadence as they slowly receded. The air was as still as that of a picture, and the only sounds that disturbed the awful silence of the forest were the scolding, croaking chatter of the blue jay, which resented our intrusion on its sacred ground, and the soft notes of that little woodland rambler, the peewee, which seems attached to the humid depths of the woods, where its only feathered companions are the grouse and an occasional hawk.

The scene was so fair and yet so majestic, that we forgot all about our mission, and gazed in silent rapture upon the beauty spread before us. While we were lost

in contemplation, we were suddenly and violently aroused from our revery by a tremendous crashing of branches behind us, and on looking round we saw a venerable giant of the forest come tumbling down from its exalted position, and fall prone to the earth with a loud thud, amidst a shower of leaves and boughs.

"That giant has run his race, and must now moulder like common mortals," exclaimed my companion, meditatively. "I wonder what causes these trees to fall when there is no wind blowing!"

I explained to him that trees were governed by the same law as everything else in nature, and fell and died from old age as much as man did.

"But they don't die suddenly of apoplexy, as that one apparently did," he naively replied.

I remarked that if old trees were deprived of rain for any length of time the roots become dry and brittle, and furnish no sustenance to the trunk and branches; but that the foliage absorbed moisture from the air, often to the amount of hundreds of pounds, and, as none of this went to the roots, the extra strain was too much for them to bear, and they gave away suddenly, and hurled the proud monarch of the forest to the ground in a moment, just as the snapping of the cords of the heart would kill a human being.

"Well," said he, "I never could before understand why trees fell on fine days, but now I can, and I wonder I never thought of it."

"We had better move after that terrier," said I, "or we shall not bag enough birds to make half a dinner."

"All right!" was the answer; "but I think we ought to take all game as it comes along. Suppose we try still hunting?"

As this idea suited me very well, we crossed the meadow, towards the ocean, and on entering the woods a fawn, about a year old, jumped up not ten feet away

from us. I gave it both barrels, which were laden with No. 6 shot, in the head and neck, while my comrade raked it along the ribs so effectively that it did not go twenty yards ere it fell dead. Having gralloched it, we placed it high up against the side of a tree by means of a long pole, in order to put it beyond the reach of prowling bears, cougars, and wild cats, and then resumed our trudging, in quest of more game. Being anxious to see the grand old ocean before we left the region, we worked towards it, but without meeting anything worth shooting.

On emerging from the forest, we obtained a magnificent view of the ocean, which extended as far as the eye could see, like a vast plate of glass; but not an object was visible on its tranquil bosom, except a steamer, which was so far away that her smoke seemed to come out of the clouds, and a white-winged schooner which groped along the horizon, and whose spars seemed to touch the blue vault above them. After gazing at this placid scene for a few minutes, we turned back into the forest depths, and travelled parallel with the beach, but though we peered intently about us, and scanned the trees closely, we saw no game. Hawks there were in abundance—in fact, the place seemed to swarm with them, for every tree contained their rude nests, while the birds themselves circled high in the air, and screamed so loudly that they drowned the roar of the ocean to such an extent as to make it seem far away. We tried to kill some that were perched on the summits of the trees, but our shot did not, apparently, reach them, for they paid no attention to it. We then moved on, and soon came to an Indian graveyard, in the midst of a dense coppice of low firs which were so dwarfed and bent by the ocean breezes that they were devoid of foliage on one side, so that they had the form of half an expanded umbrella. All the corpses were wrapped in old clothing and placed in canoes, and each had a set of household utensils or

hunting implements beside it. Each boat was tilted against a tree, and faced the ocean, as if its occupants wished to have that grand old chorister chanting an everlasting requiem to their souls.

The canoes had holes bored through them, to prevent sacrilegious hands from ever using them again, and even the household articles were rendered useless by the same means. We peered into several canoes in which the bones were loose, and found colored glass beads, anklets, bracelets, and ear-rings made of brass or abelone shells, in some of them. My friend took a few of these as souvenirs, and I borrowed a fine bow and a quiver full of arrows, as I did not think they would be of any earthly use to the sleeping braves. After we had taken whatever pleased our fancy, we strolled about to see what the place looked like, and soon came to the conclusion that it had formerly been the site of an Indian village, as heaps of bones and clam-shells were strewn about, and the ashes of long-extinguished fires were visible in various directions.

This silent retreat had such a decayed and melancholy aspect that it recalled Kramsin's description of a churchyard:

> "How frightful the grave! how deserted and drear!
> With the howls of the storm-wind—the creaks of the bier!
> And the white bones all clattering together."

When we had carefully inspected everything we crossed the glade, entered the forest, and after beating about for half an hour perhaps, came across a small pack of grouse and bagged the greater number. From that time forth we had such good luck that I had twelve brace by five o'clock, and as these were as many as I cared to carry, I suggested to my companion that we should cease work for the day. The proposition being agreeable, we *cached* our trophies, went for the fawn, and by tying its hind legs together and placing a pole between them, we were

able to travel with it at a fast walk. When we returned to the grouse we found that we would have to leave the greater portion of them behind if both of us carried the deer, and as we did not like to do that, it was decided that I should take the fawn and my companion the birds. In order to make my load as light as possible, I cut off the head and shin-bones, tied the skin of each fore leg to that of the hind leg on the opposite side, and putting my arm through, I slung the carcass on my shoulders, and "toted" it in knapsack fashion. My companion tied his birds in two parcels on a string, leaving space enough between them to allow the cord to rest on his shoulders, and thus equipped we set out for camp. Every step that we took made our loads appear heavier, and before we had travelled two miles I felt as if the fawn weighed a ton, while my associate was ready to aver that his birds had been increasing in weight at the rate of ten pounds per second, and that the cord had become so sharp that it could cut through an iron bar.

I must say that the camp seemed a long way off to us, for when we reached it we were fagged out and bathed in perspiration. The other members of the party had returned before us, and were enjoying a cup of coffee when we crawled in. Our appearance must have been somewhat ludicrous, for we were greeted with hearty laughter, and, finally, with a cheer, for our good luck and our indefatigable exertions to increase the larder. The others had killed two deer and several grouse, but the Nimrod who was to bag the bear returned without one, his excuse being that he had only met two, and neither of them gave him an opportunity of firing his rifle, as they were off in a jiffy the moment they saw him. While we were relating the adventures of the day, the red man was preparing dinner in such a methodical manner that we concluded he had received his culinary education in some place besides an Indian encampment. He cooked the

birds by thoroughly wetting the feathers, placing them in a hole in the fire, and covering them so carefully with coals and hot ashes that all air was excluded from them. When they were ready, the skin was pulled off in the cleanest manner, leaving the meat unbroken and done to a turn.

He made a venison stew by cutting the flesh of the deer and the birds into rather large pieces, and placing sliced potatoes, pieces of biscuits, onions, and salt pork in alternate layers in a pot, and seasoning each layer with pepper and salt. The pot was then filled with water, and the mess boiled until the potatoes were well done, when it was served in deep plates, which we carried in a box. Our dinner was such a fragrant and enjoyable one, and so keenly relished by all, that we complimented the cook on his proficiency in the most emphatic manner, but we might as well have complimented a stone for all the traces of feeling he exhibited. We heard subsequently that he had once been used as a guide and assistant cook by a certain magnate who generally carried a trained *chef de cuisine* with him whenever he went on a fishing or hunting expedition, and that it was from this artist that our man had learned his business.

When the repast was over we stretched ourselves beside the fire and related adventures until ten o'clock, and then retired to rest on our lowly couch of fragrant boughs. This life in the wilderness seems to me to be the source whence Gray drew his inspiration for one of the verses in the "Ode on the Pleasures arising from Vicissitude," for to the hunter above all other men could these lines be applied:

> "From toil he wins his spirits light,
> From busy day the peaceful night,
> Rich, from the very want of wealth,
> In heaven's best treasures—peace and health."

We certainly found peace and rest, for we had scarcely

touched the rude pillows, which were made of our clothing, ere we were fast asleep. We were awake before daylight, and as soon as breakfast was over we decided to move in a body during the day, and devote our attention to bears and cougars if we could find any, and if not, to whatever animals came in our way. While waiting for the dawn to appear, my companion of the previous day told the others what we had done in the graveyard, and all expressed a desire to visit it, to see if they could find anything worth taking away as souvenirs.

I happened to be looking at the guide when they said this, and as his face was turned towards the fire, he being then engaged in taking a deer's head out of the ground oven, I saw every motion of his features in the most distinct manner, and I must say I was not at all pleased with his expression, for his eyes seemed to fairly flash fire, while a sardonic smile gleamed for a moment on his dusky countenance. I was surprised at this, and expressed it so plainly that when he lifted his head and saw me staring at him, he lowered it again in a moment, and walked behind the tent as if he were going after something. Not knowing what to make of his humor, I said nothing at the time, and joined in the conversation of the others until it was time to start on our hunt. We then called for the guide, whose name was Ilkwiss, but he did not appear. We waited an hour longer for him, thinking he had gone into the forest, but as he was still absent we concluded he had left us for good, but on what grounds we could not determine.

I then told my comrades what feelings I had seen him display, and they deduced from this that we had offended him by taking, or presuming to take, anything out of the graveyard, which, to all Indians, is a most sacred place, as they consider it the eternal home of the spirits of the departed. Any desecration of such a spot is therefore a great sacrilege in their eyes, and one which, in

olden times, when the whites were scarce in the country, would have cost the pilferer his life, for they think that a person who touches the dead or steals anything belonging to them ought to be killed, to appease their manes, or that the tribe will suffer from some great calamity. We were very sorry for what we had done, but as we could not undo it, we concluded to make the best of our position, and go without the guide until we could get another. Our first act was to inquire who would act as cook, but as nobody seemed willing to volunteer for that situation, it was voted that whoever missed the first shot during the day should be unanimously elected chief of the kitchen. When we moved out of camp every one was fully determined not to be elected if he could help it, but as the "best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a glee," we found it the same, for the gentleman who had the most objection to that situation--he who loved the tent pole so much that he would not move away from it while we were erecting our quarters—fired at a grouse that rose almost at his feet, and missed it in the cleanest manner.

This feat was greeted with a hearty cheer, and the performer was promptly ordered back to prepare dinner, dire threats being hurled at him in case he proved derelict in his duties. He looked very much crest-fallen at his ill fortune, but he obeyed the fiat for all that, and solemnly returned to camp to apostrophize salt pork, and rue the moment he so far forgot himself as to fire at that grouse. When he left us, we walked slowly in an extended line, and carefully scanned every shrub and tree in search of game. I saw a large black bear at one time, but having nothing larger than No. 5 shot in my case, I allowed it to escape without a salute, as it did not seem to want to know me, or else it had such urgent business in another direction that it could not stop to make my acquaintance.

A wolf also passed close by and halted to gaze on me,

and being apparently well satisfied with its scrutiny, it trotted away, much to my disappointment, for though I wished it a "speedy taking off," it was not by running off, but by leaving me its hide. While I was trudging through the tangled shrubbery I heard shots quite frequently to my right—I was on the extreme left—but I did not fire once in the space of an hour, although I knew very well that grouse were as abundant as they could well be, and that deer were numerous enough to satisfy the most insatiable hunter. I floundered along, however, until I came to a small lake which was dammed up in several places by the domiciles of beavers. Being very anxious to capture one of these creatures, I watched their dams for the space of fifteen or twenty minutes, and finally caught a glimpse of two as they thrust their noses above the water, quite close to the wall, and not forty feet away from me. When they got their heads close together I gave them both barrels in rapid succession, and killed them, as the shot penetrated to the brain through the eyes. I then secured them before they could sink out of sight.

Slinging them on a pole, by tying their hind legs together, I started back for camp, in order to hand them to the cook, so that he might give us roast beaver tail for dinner. I arrived there in due time—though I feared once or twice I had lost my way, as I crossed and recrossed my own tracks—and I had no sooner entered than the chief of the pots began questioning me about my movements in such a peculiar manner that I asked him what ailed him, and intimated that the dignity of his new duties had turned his head.

"Somebody has been fooling around the camp since I've been here, and trying to scare me, and I thought probably it was you," he said.

"Did you see any person?"

"I did once, behind that tree"—pointing to a huge

spruce—"but when I got there I couldn't see anybody."

"Did you look for any signs?"

"No."

"Perhaps it was that guide," I replied. I'll go and see if he has been standing there, and if he has, we know that he is up to some mischief."

I started off accordingly, and on reaching the tree I found the fresh imprints of moccasins on the moss that grew at its base. Convinced of the correctness of my suspicions, I returned and asked the cook if he had lost anything, and he replied that he had not.

"You had better see," said I.

Both of us then commenced examining the food, pots, pans, and knives and forks, and found them all right. The idea then suddenly dawned upon me to look for the bow and arrow I had left in the tent, and the moment I entered I saw that it was gone, and also the ornaments which my companion had taken from the cemetery.

"That guide has been here," I exclaimed.

"Not to my knowledge," was the response.

"He has," said I, "because the trinkets and weapons brought from the graveyard have been stolen."

"Well," he replied, after being convinced that they had been taken, "I've read about the cunning of Indians, but I would not believe they could steal like that and get away without my knowledge."

As nothing could be done just then, we set about preparing dinner, and by the time the others returned, at the unfashionable hour of two o'clock, we had roasted beaver tail, roast deer's head, venison stew, and other palatable dishes ready for them. While we were doing justice to the repast, the loss of the trinkets was mentioned, and after an animated discussion about the matter it was resolved to give the guide five dollars as a present for being such a good thief.

The midday meal was hardly over before the forest, which had been as still during the morning as if it were a painted one, began to get its voice, so to speak, and to bow and sough before a stiff breeze which blew from the ocean. Some said this indicated rain, and suggested that it would be best to remain in camp during the afternoon, but others thought we ought to make the most of the time at our command and get as much game as possible. The latter having carried the point, we started off again, leaving the cook behind to keep camp and drive away any animals that might take a fancy to our food. We had not proceeded more than a mile before it became evident that a storm was brewing, but, not caring to turn back, we continued on our course, though we met no game except grouse, and these we tumbled out of the trees, where they had sought refuge from the threatened violence of the elements.

While we were wandering about, the forest giants changed their notes from subdued murmuring to a hissing moan, and, finally, swayed violently back and forth and fairly roared. The rain also came down in such heavy torrents that the whole heavens seemed to have been let loose, while the wind screamed, and whirled leaves and branches through the air in the wildest confusion. Finding it impossible to face the fury of the tempest, we sought shelter under the protecting arms of a huge fir, which must have seen many centuries of life, but it proved anything but a refuge to us, for we were drenched to the skin in a short time. Our situation finally became so uncomfortable that we decided to get back to camp as soon as possible, for it was evident that we could not be in a worse plight than we were. We therefore sallied forth, and bending low our heads, in order to overcome the resistance of the wind and protect ourselves from the clouds of sticks that were flying about, we ran for our quarters as fast as our clinging garments

would permit us. When we got there we found everything in confusion, for the fire was extinguished, the tent rent in several places, torn from its fastenings, and flapping violently in the breeze; our flour and crackers were soaked through with rain; and our bedding was floating in a miniature lake. This condition of affairs was most unexpected, but as dwellers in and lovers of the wilderness are imbued with hope and self-reliance above all things, our calamities did not worry us much. Seeing that it would be useless to camp out in such a storm, we hitched up the horses, packed our sadly torn tent and the cooking utensils, and drove away, in hopes of being able to find shelter in some farm-house for the night.

After driving for a couple of hours through the trackless forest, we struck a cow path, and followed this up until we came to the spot where the Indian camp had stood, but we found that place deserted by all living things except an owl that hooted at us from the top of a moaning fir. Knowing where we were, we drove rapidly onward and soon reached the hotel at Blanktown, where we were furnished with lodgings, and a comfortable supper, the main ingredients of which we supplied ourselves. Our clothes were dried by the fire while we were in bed, and when we arose the next morning they were fit to wear.

We learned a piece of news the next morning from a farmer who had just come in with a load of hay, that startled us. The first item was, that the landlord, in order to lure people to the hotel, had spread abroad that we were officials looking about for the best route for a proposed railway; and the second, that the Indians had gone to the graveyard we had visited, in order to protect it from further desecration, even at the cost of their lives if necessary. He even intimated that they would have attacked us had we gone there, and that we were fortunate

to get away with the horses, as the savages would consider no punishment too severe for us. As he knew the Indians very well he was asked to explain the matter about the graveyard to them, but he said it would be a useless waste of words, as no one could make any explanation that would satisfy them in such a case. He also intimated that we would do well to keep away from the vicinity of the tribe for some time. Not caring to have any trouble with the savages, we started homeward after breakfast and reached there in due time, and so ended one trip after the Franklin variety of the Canada grouse. I learned afterwards that the Indians were so angry at what we had done that they would have caused us no little trouble had they caught us, but as they had not, they reported us to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and there the matter stopped, so far as we were concerned.

I have wandered for hours through the forest in search of this grouse, and was often fortunate enough to secure several brace, besides other game, but I never saw the bird display any other traits except those I have mentioned. I have known the birds to be so numerous around the camp when parties which I accompanied were out deer or bear hunting in the woods, that I think it would be safe to say that a man could kill a hundred in a day, provided he shot them as he found them, that is, on the ground or on trees. I know we found them so plentiful at certain seasons that we did not condescend to kill them except as we wanted them for immediate use.

CHAPTER V.

THE DUSKY GROUSE.

The Dusky Grouse—Its various names—Size, weight, and color—Character of flesh—A handsome bird—The courting song—A feathered ventriloquist—How to find its retreat—Nesting—Unsuspicious mothers—Tame chickens—Food—Restless disposition of the birds—Favorite haunts—Do not pack—Are wild in winter—Their habit of squatting—Abundant beyond the Rocky Mountains—Indian superstition concerning them—Different varieties—A visit to Lake Cœur d'Alene—Magnificent scenery—An aërial drama—Flying contest between an osprey and an eagle—Philosophizing on human nature and bird nature—A night scene—Cries of wild animals—In the forest—Death of a stag and a doe—Maternal feeling of the latter—Superstitions about bears—How to cook deer heads and bear meat—Indian visitors—Hunting the grouse—Their method of concealment—A confidant bird—A large bag—Abundance of trout—How to cook them—Searching for a lost punster—A wolf serenade—A varied gamebag—Spearing trout—A feast in the wilderness—A mountain storm—A delightful reminiscence.

The Dusky Grouse (*Canace obscura*), which is placed in the sub-genus *Dendragapus*, is known by various names in different parts of the country—such as the blue, gray, mountain, and pine grouse, hill cock and cock of the woods, and, in a few places, as the fool-hen, from its peculiarly unsuspicious nature—ranks high as a table-bird, its white flesh being tender, succulent, and of a delicate flavor. It is larger than any of the grouse, except the sage cock, an adult male weighing about three pounds and a half when in prime condition. It is darkish in color; the tail is brownish-black, but is more or less marked with gray, and has a broad, slate-gray, terminal bar—a characteristic not seen in the other species. The back and wings are dark-brown, finely undulated with irregular, slate-gray feathers, mixed with ochreous

brown, and some white on the scapularies. The long feathers of the sides are similar to those of the back, and the under parts are a bluish-gray, variegated with white, especially on the lower part of the abdomen. The cheeks are black, the throat is speckled with black and white, the legs are feathered to the toes, and the usual warty skin is found over the eye. The female is lighter in color than the male, and also smaller—the latter having a length varying from eighteen to twenty-four inches, the former from sixteen to twenty inches.

The male is probably the handsomest of the grouse family, when he is in full plumage, in spring or winter, as he has a proud and stately appearance, which makes him seem exceedingly self-conscious. He looks more imposing during the mating season than at any other period, especially when he is indulging in erotic calls, as he then swells with pride, and struts around with the air of a conquering gallant. He commences calling as early as February in some parts of the Pacific Coast, but he does not, as a rule, develop into a professional troubadour until March. He is then most persistent in attracting attention to his lonely condition, as he frequently indulges in erotic lays both night and day, with only slight intermissions. His courting song is a deep, prolonged, whirring noise, which is repeated rapidly several times, then stopped for a while. This is supposed to be produced by the alternate inflation and contraction of the air sacs on the sides of the throat.

No species of the family has so much control over its voice as this one, for so misleading are its calls that a person might imagine they came from a long distance, whereas the bird uttering them may not be ten feet away. Experience does not always prevent a person from being deceived by them, for I have sometimes gone to the foot of a tree in which I knew a cock had taken refuge, and been led to seek for him elsewhere on hearing his cry. The

best way of finding the retreat of this feathered ventriloquist is to listen to his calling long enough to enable one to locate the spot from which it issues. This frequently requires time and patience, and a diligent scanning of the trees. Owing to his darkish hue and his habit of remaining immovable on a branch, a man may search for a long time before recognizing him, as he looks like a large knot at a distance. The mates readily find one another, however, and never, so far as my experience goes, fail in immediately detecting each other's retreat. I have seen the female fly to the tree in which her gallant was established, as soon as he commenced piping his lay; yet I could not tell from what direction his calls came, and I would never have known, in all probability, were it not for the flight of the hen.

This species, like the others, nests on the ground, the eggs being of a creamy hue, speckled with chocolate brown. The mother is dutiful and painstaking, and as good a provider of food as she can well be, but she does not manifest such alarm about her brood as the ruffed grouse, nor does she employ any of the stratagems of the latter in leading the enemy away from them. She takes very little notice of man at any time, and should he catch one of her chicks, she would merely walk about anxiously, and cluck her fears, much as a domestic hen does. When the young are about three months old they are delicious eating, but they do not afford much sport, owing to their tameness, for they will allow a dog to approach them to within a few feet before they fly away. Even when treed, a brood will stand firing until all are killed, especially if the lower ones are shot first. I have known fifteen of them to be bagged on a public road before the remainder became wise enough to retreat out of range. Both old and young live on berries, nuts, seeds, insects, and grain during the summer and autumn, and on the buds of fir, pine, and spruce trees in winter and early

spring. Being solitary in habit, and of a roving, restless disposition, this grouse may be found in many regions the opposite of each other in character, but its favorite haunts are wooded mountains having an altitude varying from one to six thousand feet. It makes its winter home among the highest trees in districts where snow falls heavily, and there it lives secure from all dangers, except the lightning or the tempest.

It is found in all the wooded regions from the Rocky Mountains to the Cascade and Sierra Nevada ranges. It mingles with the ruffed grouse in some places, for both species are much alike in taste and habits. It does not "pack," as its prairie congeners do; hence, it is a rare occurrence to find more than ten or a dozen together after the families break up in the autumn. Single birds are met with in winter oftener than packs, especially if they have been shot at much; yet I have seen a group of twelve in the month of December. They are wilder in winter than at any other time, but they will even then allow a man to come within easy shooting range before they attempt to flee. If they become alarmed when they are on the ground, they squat as closely as they can, stretch out their necks, and peer vigilantly about; and if they are flushed, they rise with a loud whirr, and, with a few rapid, powerful strokes of the wing, find refuge in some towering conifer.

A person may fire at them in a tree a dozen times without eliciting a note or a movement from them, for they stand the leaden hail that falls about them with greater indifference than the coolest veteran that ever entered a battle field. If one is wounded, however, it will attempt to fly, and this is likely to cause the whole pack to dart away, but they may not go more than two or three hundred yards before they alight again. It is nothing unusual to meet twenty or thirty families in a day's walk in some of the regions beyond the Rocky

Mountains, and a person fond of slaughter may bag most of them, owing to their tameness and unsuspicious nature. Some western sportsmen say that the hen has two broods in a season, if the spring opens early and the weather is fine, but that the second brood rarely numbers more than seven or eight, or about one-half the first. The chicks are able to fly when they are three weeks old, and are strong enough in August to look after themselves. When they are with the mother she takes them to the creek bottoms late in the afternoon, and there they may be found during the evening and early morning. If they are scattered, they lie well to a dog, and as they rise only as they are flushed, the majority, if not all, may be brought to bag, for, though swift on the wing, they fly straight ahead.

The Indians of some portions of the West have such a superstitious reverence for this bird during its mating season that they will not injure it, even when they are suffering from hunger, for fear it might bring them "bad medicine;" but these scruples disappear later on, when the young are in prime condition, for they then capture them in every possible way, from snaring to shooting. They often follow single birds or small coveys by tracking them in snow, and when the footsteps end they look for the fugitives in the trees, though often without success, owing to the harmony of hue existing between them and the foliage amid which they seek shelter. Two varieties of this species are supposed to exist in the West, yet the difference between them is slight, though perhaps sufficient to give them a varietal name. The variety distinguished as *fuliginosus*, which is the one indigenous to Oregon, Washington Territory, British Columbia, and Alaska, is darker than the others, and is plumbaceous beneath, without any white borders to the feathers, except about the flanks and vent. The head is a dusky black, the tarsi are lead-colored, the

irides are brown or hazel, and the tail, which has an extreme length of seven and a half inches, has a band of deep-blue or lead color, about three-fifths of an inch in width. The male is sooty black above, the mottlings being scarcely visible, and the scapularies are devoid of white markings. The black of the female is broken above by transverse rufous mottlings; the abdomen is dusky or leaden in hue; and the plumbaceous color of the throat and flanks is marked by triangular and arrow-shaped dots of rusty white.

The variety known as Richardson's grouse is devoid of the broad terminal band of gray on the tail which the typical species displays; the tail is also more square at the tip, uniformly black, and the feathers composing it are broader and nearly truncate. It is not unlike the European black cock, yet they may be readily distinguished apart. This variety and the true dusky grouse merge into each other so closely in the central Rocky Mountains that few persons can distinguish them apart until they have been carefully compared, and even then it is sometimes rather difficult to decide which is which. Men who are more interested in sport than in technical details pay little attention to these differences, however, and are willing to let naturalists contend over them while they devour the birds. Although it may be said that the whole of the lower mountains, extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Ranges, swarm with the dusky grouse during the summer and autumn, yet I have not seen them so abundant in any part of the continent as on the Blue Mountains, which run through Oregon and Washington Territory; the Bitter Root Mountains, which divide Idaho and Montana; and the series of elevated wooden ridges that stretch northward towards the British line, in Idaho.

The latter Territory is one of the finest game regions on the Continent, as it boasts of nearly every animal

known beyond the Rocky Mountains, south of the sixty-fifth parallel. It is also replete with majestic scenery—its snow-clad peaks, magnificent lakes, stupendous falls, and mighty rivers comparing favorably with those of Switzerland—while few regions can compete with it in the density and extent of its sub-alpine forests, or in its strange volcanic scenes, which are as unique as they are awe-inspiring. During one of my rambles through Idaho I was invited by a resident to accompany him to an Indian reservation in the northern part of the Territory, where he was going on business. He promised that, if I went with him, he would show me some of the grandest scenery on the Continent, and give me an opportunity of enjoying such sport with rod and gun as I had never dreamed of in my wildest flights of fancy.

I accepted the invitation with the promptest alacrity, and managed to secure one for a companion named—Smith will do—whose acquaintance I had made in a stage coach while travelling through the country. Smith—what a convenient name for those who do not want to invent one—was a capital fellow in many ways, but he had one besetting sin of which no amount of lecturing would break him, and that was punning. And such puns! I often wondered how he escaped with his life after torturing people with them, for they were often vile enough to cause an archbishop to think of murder.

Smith was so delighted with the idea of rambling through the region in the society of an experienced cicerone, and dipping his lines in pleasant waters—for he was more of a Walton than a Nimrod, though nothing in the shape of sport came amiss to him—that he indulged in a dozen death-dealing puns in less than an hour after the invitation was received. The morning appointed for starting on our expedition found us awake with the sun, and after dressing, and getting our implements of war in good condition, we walked to my friend's house and

were there introduced to Dr. Pillbox, a young physician who was to form one of our party. When breakfast was over, we took our seats in a large wagon drawn by two sturdy *cayuses* and started on our journey. We arrived at our destination in due time, and after our host had transacted his business, he turned the heads of the horses for Cœur d'Alene Lake. This was before it was occupied as a military post. Lake Cœur d'Alene, which is one of the most charming bodies of water on the Continent, has a length of about twenty-five miles and a width that varies from two to ten miles. It is surrounded by a dense forest which grows to its verge, and is reflected in the water with mirror-like fidelity. It has one outlet called the Spokane River, which passes through some very romantic scenery, and produces in its course several beautiful cascades, the most important of which are the Spokane Falls. This stream has a width of one hundred and sixty yards at the outlet, and a depth of several feet, so that it springs into life full grown. The water in both the lake and the river is so clear that the bottom, which is several fathoms down in the former, can be plainly seen, while the movements of the tiny fishes may be readily noted at night with the aid of a hunting or fishing lamp.

We pitched our tent on one of the promontories, as this gave us a magnificent view of the lake and the fir and pine-clad mountains which stretched back of it in roll after roll until they vanished in the dim distance. These mountains rise abruptly from the water, there being scarcely any break between them, except the debris washed down by rains and floods, and that is of so little consequence, comparatively speaking, that the lake may be said to be buried in the summit of the mountains. It looks as if it occupied the bed of an old crater, for the region surrounding it shows violent igneous action, and the ground is so hard that no water can be found ten feet

from the banks even by sinking wells to a depth of several feet. The shore ends so abruptly in some places that a man of war can float alongside it, but it recedes gradually in others, until it finally breaks off at a height of twenty or thirty feet above the bottom. The magnificence of the panorama visible from this lake cannot be described, and must be seen to be appreciated.

Our tent was pitched in an alcove of towering pines, which seemed to have been arranged as a temple for the nymphs of the forest, so regularly were they grouped. This idea was strengthened by the hymn-like murmuring of the branches which bent to and fro in the evening breeze, and the gentle soughing of the waves on the pebbly beach. When the tent was erected and all preparations made for a regular week's work, by gathering and chopping wood, digging holes in which to cook bear and deer heads, and cleaning away the deep bed of leaves that surrounded the camp, it was so late in the evening that we deemed it best to postpone an assault on the game of the region until the next morning. I was much pleased with this decision, as it gave me an opportunity of enjoying the magnificent landscape spread out before me, and to drink in its varied beauties.

While Smith and myself were seated on the shore, absorbed in our own thoughts, and heedless alike of the moaning of the pines or the screaming of the loons, which rode on the wavelets in the middle of the lake, our attention was attracted by a drama which was taking place in the air. We had noticed, as soon as we came near the lake, the abundance of hawks, ospreys, and white-headed, or fishing eagles, that were either sailing and circling in the firmament or demurely perched on some towering tree from which they commanded a view of the lake and the surrounding country. We inferred from this that the region was well stocked with food, but we did not know until afterwards what a favorite ground it

was with several species of predaceous animals. The first thing that aroused us from our revery was the alarmed cry of a duck, and on looking up we saw a mallard, which was high in the air, rushing downward with the speed of a hurricane, while a hawk, which looked like a speck in the clouds, pursued it. The duck tried every stratagem it knew to escape its pursuer; it darted hither and thither in the most abrupt manner, its aim being, evidently, to get to the water as soon as possible, and this the cheetah of the air tried to prevent by dashing under it, and causing it to rise again, or to sheer off from its course. The chase lasted for some time, owing to the habit the hawk had of rising above the duck in order to make a downward dart at it. Whenever it did this, the latter would rush for the lake, only to bring its relentless enemy swooping down again like a meteor. The hawk finally made a lunge at the terrified fugitive, not a hundred yards from us, and this caused it to rush for the shelter of the woods, but its fate was evidently sealed, for its deadly foe was just about to strike it when the report of a gun rang through the forest, and the hawk fell dead, while the mallard, with cries of terror, went sailing in safety through the trees.

On looking in the direction of the detonation to see who had so promptly come to the rescue of the fugitive, we saw the doctor standing on the edge of the lake with a gun in his hand, and recognized in him the chivalric hero who had defended the weak from the murderous oppressor. Smith was so impressed with this noble deed that he indulged in a fit of poetry concerning it, and this he finally jotted down in my note book, but as it is not of the very highest order of rhythm, I will only quote the first verse, merely as a sample:

> "That pirate of the air—the savage hawk,
> Pursued a duck till he madé it squawk;
> But Dr. Pillbox, with his gun so gory,
> Shot him, and crowned himself with glory."

This beautiful piece of composition was afterwards shown to the doctor, but he did not seem to be very much impressed with it, as he called it bosh. His cynical comments at length nettled the one-horse poet so much that he solemnly vowed he would never again write any verses extolling Pillbox or his gun.

In less than fifteen minutes after this incident occurred we had an opportunity of seeing a struggle between an eagle and an osprey for the possession of a fish. We had noticed the latter bird circling high in the air directly above us, but it seemed to us that we had hardly taken our eyes off it ere a light cloud darted past us with lightning speed, and in a moment more we heard a whisst, and saw the osprey rise from the water with a huge trout struggling in its talons. Beating the air heavily with its wings, it rose slowly upwards, and gave vent to its feelings of satisfaction in sharp screams. It had not proceeded far on its skyward course, however, ere a speck was seen to shoot from the clouds, and a few moments later a bald-headed eagle was plainly visible, as it darted at the feathered angler. The latter evaded the blow, and began circling upwards, but the other, which was unencumbered by any weight, rose above it, and both then began rising spirally and in broad circles. Finding that it was fish or life, the osprey plunged downward with lightning speed, in hopes of being able to reach the woods, but the monarch of the air was too quick for it, and giving it a violent blow on the back, knocked the fish out of its talons and a small cloud of feathers out of its plumage. The osprey, recognizing that it was discomfited, fled to a tree and there indulged in loud plaints at its treatment, while the eagle darted after the trout, and catching it before it touched the water, bore it skyward in triumph.

"There is human nature in a nut-shell for you!" exclaimed Smith.

"How is that?" I asked.

"It's plain enough, I'm sure. You know the big fish eat the little fish; the osprey preys on all, if it gets the chance; while that bully, the eagle, which has no merit except strength, takes them away from the bird which catches them. Talk of justice in this world! In my opinion the longest pole gets the persimmons—in other words that might makes right with the majority of men, and with every animal. People talk about fair play, but they never show it if it is to their advantage not to do so."

"There are some exceptions," I replied.

"Yes, but such men are sure to be beaten by others who are more unscrupulous. Those two aërial dramas which we have just witnessed fairly represent human nature, while the doctor is the hero of one of the pieces, for he could have shot both duck and hawk if he wished, and I believe he would, too, if he had wanted the duck for dinner."

Not being in a mood for argument just then, I allowed him to philosophize to his heart's content until night came on, and then returned to the tent, where our plans were laid for the work of the coming day. We were to shoot and fish, taking everything edible that we came across, but only in sufficient quantities to liberally supply our wants, as we did not wish to wantonly destroy anything having the semblance of life. When everything was understood, I went out to take a last look at the lake, and found it so enchantingly attractive that I gazed long and earnestly at it. The moon being at the full, her soft rays illuminated every object quite distinctly, and rippled and played in the water in such a manner as to recall visions of fairy-land. The silence was so great as to seem droning, but the inmates of the forest and mountains obtained their voices after awhile, and rent the night air with their cries. The weird calls of the loons

on the lake, the deep hooting of owls, the screams of the cougars and lynxes, and the melancholy howling of the wolves united in one volume, and made the region seem a perfect pandemonium of animals let loose. The din they created was so great that it was long past midnight ere I became habituated enough to it to fall into a restless slumber, in which I dreamed of deer and wolves and bears, which I was constantly trying to shoot, but never could, for I was always sure to miss or lose sight of every one I aimed at.

We were up so long before daylight that we were almost tired of waiting for it to appear; but when it did finally come, we were well repaid for our patience by the splendid illumination we witnessed, and the fine effects of light and shade that were visible on the water and the forest. When the red ball of fire first crept above the eastern hills, the woods and lake were wrapped in gloom, but as it rose higher and higher the long clouds of black vanished gradually until, in the course of an hour, the tarn gleamed like molten silver, while rays of many hues gilded the tree-tops. Everything seemed so gentle, and was wrapped in such solemn silence, that it recalled visions of the islands of bliss; it certainly appeared to me to be one of the most soothing and tranquil scenes I had ever beheld. As soon as it was light enough to enable us to travel, we moved off in a body, and on entering the forest depths the half-breed was appointed huntsman, and sent with three hounds into a thicket, about two hundred yards away, with instructions to work towards a position we were to take on a promontory, half a mile beyond. He had scarcely entered the appointed place ere we were brought to an abrupt halt by the clamorous cry of the three hounds and the cur, which composed the pack, and a moment later a splendid buck came bounding towards us. When he was about forty yards away the doctor fired at him,

and brought him to the ground, but he was up again in a moment, and would have been off, had not Smith lodged a dose of buckshot in his body. On receiving this, he wheeled about once or twice, as if he were dazed, then swayed and staggered, and finally fell in a lump.

When we approached him we found he was full grown, and the doctor said he was one of the finest stags he had ever seen.

"Yes," exclaimed Smith, "and you and I made him stag around nicely, didn't we?"

"Pillbox looked at him in a melancholy manner, as if he were sorry that a man should be troubled with such a mania, but he said nothing, and turning to me he pointed out where the bullet had entered the heart.

"'This hart's bowed down with weight of woe' just now," said Smith, pointing to the same hole, and assuming the air of an undertaker.

"That shot of mine would have killed him, had you not fired," answered the doctor; "so I'll claim first blood, for luck, for nothing can stand a dose of lead in the heart. The shock to the system alone would have scared him to death, for it was severe enough to kill a cow, let alone a deer."

"I know that," responded Smith; "you may claim him, for I know that nothing can cow that hart like a dose of lead in the right ventricle."

"Go to blazes with your old puns!" shouted Pillbox; "one might think you had just come out of a lunatic asylum for punsters."

This display of assumed choler caused us to laugh heartily, and actually silenced Smith, for he did not attempt to make a pun for fifteen or twenty minutes; but when I bagged a badger, it was too much for him, and, on saying that I would not have killed it did I not want it for a specimen, he, in a slow and solemn tone, said:

"I can understand how bad-ger must have felt when

you found it necessary to shoot him, and I can sympathize with your feelings. It is very painful to be badger-cide."

As no notice was taken of this, he relapsed into silence until we reached the promontory. He was placed on a stand there, with instructions to shoot anything that attempted to bite him, even if it were a field mouse, and he promised to obey orders. We had not been long in position before the chorus of the dogs again resounded throughout the forest, and in less than twenty minutes we saw a deer swimming rapidly through the lake, and heading directly for us. I was on a runway below Smith, and as he seemed to have a good chance of killing the animal, I ran towards him to see if I could get a shot, in case he missed, but I soon found I had had my race for nothing, for on reaching his stand he had the creature lying on the sand before him, having shot it in the head with a charge of buckshot.

"What made you shoot that doe?" I exclaimed; "you know she is running with her young."

"Doe you not like it?" he asked, with an unsophisticated air, as if he wanted to pretend he did not know he was trying to perpetrate a vile pun.

"No," said I, "you should never shoot a doe when she has her fawns with her; it is really cruel!"

"I'm very sorry," was the answer, "but I will not doe it again."

The huntsman and the other members of the company soon joined us, and we learned from the former that the doe and her two fawns had started off together before the dogs, but that she concealed the latter in some shrubbery, and then led the hounds a merry race until she plunged into the lake. He thought that few animals could exceed a "squaw deer" in sagacity when she had her fawns by her side, as she had the habit of hiding them in thickets, and then circling about them, in order

to throw the dogs off their line and cause them to follow herself. The victorious punster, on hearing this, congratulated himself highly for having overthrown such a sagacious creature with a little lead, and became so recklessly industrious that he offered to help carry her to camp; but his offer was not accepted, as he and I were detailed to bring in some birds, while the others were to skin the deer and catch some fish in the lake.

The entire party then started to go back into the forest, but we had not proceeded a quarter of a mile before we espied a bear to the windward, not seventy yards away. On seeing us, it raised on its hind legs and stared at us with an inquisitive expression, that proved it knew nothing of man. I lifted my gun to fire at it, but the half-breed asked me not to shoot.

"Why not?" said I, in a whisper.

"Because he is showing his cross, and it would be very unlucky to kill him now."

"We will bear his cross for him," exclaimed Smith, and, raising his gun, he muttered: "Look out, Mr. Bruin, I'm brewin' some trouble for you"—then fired both barrels, which were loaded with buckshot, at its head.

The doctor and myself followed his lead, and when the smoke cleared away we saw the animal lying dead. The half-breed did not seem to like this, and when I asked him on what ground he objected to my firing, he said that all old hunters considered it very "bad medicine" to shoot at a bear if it first showed the white cross on its breast. This was a new and a pleasant idea to me, as it indicated a deep reverential feeling in the minds of men who are generally supposed to be dead to all religious sentiments; so I must say I was glad to hear the man state it in all seriousness, although I considered it only a superstition scarcely worthy of the Indians. This unexpected addition to our stock of provisions was

gladly welcomed, and as we had all the heavy game we wanted for that day, we decided to take what we had killed into camp. This was no easy work, as the bear weighed about three hundred pounds, and the stag did not weigh much less. We did manage to get them in, however, and deposited them in our store-room, which was simply a *wickiup* made of boughs. When they were skinned, the cook built fires in the two holes in the ground, and another near them, in which he placed several stones.

When the wood was burned down, the coals were taken out of the holes with improvised tongs, made of two green sticks, and the red-hot stones were put in their places. The heads of the stag and doe, with the necks downward, were then laid in one hole, and a piece of the bear, wrapped in a deer skin, was put in the other, and all were covered with layers of hot stones and some grass, and, finally, with a coating of clay, which was packed so closely that no air could pass through it. This is the ordinary method of cooking the heads of animals in the Far West, and an excellent method it is, especially if they are not wanted for ten or twelve hours. While we were resting from the fatigue incident upon bringing the game into camp, we were visited by a band of Stehitswee Indians, who were going to another part of the lake for the purpose of hunting and fishing, and collecting some of the wild roots that grew along the Spokane River. The men seemed to be sturdy fellows, with rather agreeable features—for savages—but the women were anything but attractive, for they seemed a thoroughly degraded lot. We were much interested in a young squaw—who was rather obese—an unusual thing at her age—as she seemed to be proud of her proportions. The doctor was so amused with her that he said she reminded him of a fat heifer.

"Would you like to heifer for a wife?" asked Smith, in the most unsophisticated manner.

"I should think not," was the answer; "why, her features are about as pretty as those of an ape."

"Then you think her ape pretty woman."

"I think you are ape bore."

"Which proves that I sometimes talk to hogs. Ta-ta, doctor; I'm off."

"I know you are. You must have been off your nut since you were born, or you wouldn't torture innocent people with such vile puns."

"Well, I'll give you a rest for a while," said Smith, smilingly. He then locked his arm in mine, and calling the cur, which readily followed us, we started into the forest in search of feathered game. We travelled about half a mile before seeing anything worth firing at, and them came suddenly upon a brood of dusky grouse, which were feeding on the berries that grew profusely in every direction. We set the dog at them, and when they rose on the wing we scored a couple of brace with both guns.

"Mark! mark!" yelled Smith, although they did not fly twenty yards before they settled in a tree whose branches were so far apart we could plainly see every one of them.

Having picked up the slain, we advanced to the retreat of the fugitives, and Smith opened fire on them, in order to make them fly, but they refused to move. By bringing one of the upper birds tumbling down, he managed to induce the others to fly, and to give us both a wing shot, which netted us a brace and a half. The next group we met was a regular bachelor party whose members were so tame that they walked ahead of us for some time, for I was so interested in watching their movements and stately attitudes that I would not permit my companion to fire at them. They finally took to flight, and were beyond range before I even thought of shooting, for it seemed a pity to kill them. Smith did not

appreciate my sentimentalism at the time, so he rallied me good naturedly on my sudden fit of goody-goodiness, and hinted that I ought to join an infant class and help them in singing that highly novel composition:—

> "Hark, to the woods, the sound of a gun,
> The wounded bird flutters and dies,—
> I'm sure it is wicked for nothing but fun,
> To shoot the poor bird as it flies."

"That is very good so far as it goes," I exclaimed, "and I would be willing to subscribe to it to a certain extent."

"I don't believe in shooting for fun, either," he said, "but I do believe in killing birds for food, else what use on earth are they?"

Whirr! whirr! whirr! Three flights of grouse rose up not thirty feet away from us. "Jewhittaker" ! exclaimed Smith, "but they startled me. I must have the grouse ague to be scared in this manner.

"They are all in the same tree," I replied, "so you need not have the ague long. Come on."

We started off on a run and were soon at the base of the tree in which they had sought shelter, but on looking up among the foliage we could see no signs of them. We peered and peered until we strained our eyes, and still failed to detect anything animate, but as I was acquainted with the peculiar habit the birds have of standing motionless on a branch, I suggested that we should fire simultaneously at any excrescences on the boughs, in order to rout them, and the idea being acceptable, we blazed away at a large limb, which seemed to be full of knobs. Our fire was answered by an alarmed cluck, and the startling whirr of rushing wings, and though the greater portion of the birds flew away, yet three came tumbling down with such rapidity that Smith said it was raining grouse. Having marked down the fugitives, we

started after them as soon as we picked up the dead, and were among them again in less than five minutes.

While peering about for them, I saw a magnificent male drop on the ground, not forty feet away and stare at us with such an expression of mingled inquisitiveness and confidence that I was loth to shoot him, for his mien was stately, and his eyes glowed with a liquid brilliancy. The dog having espied him, rushed at him, and before I knew what I was about I fired at him when he began to ply his pinions, and brought him down with force enough, apparently, to knock a hole in the earth. I then directed my attention to the birds in the trees, and managed to rout them gradually, and get a shot on the wing as they flew away at a high altitude, but my success was not very great, owing to the density of the forest, which soon concealed them from view.

Smith was in his glory when he got wing shots, for he poured out bad puns so rapidly that I fancied he killed more birds with them than he did with his gun. We had fine sport all the afternoon, but the only species of the *Tetrao* family we met was the dusky grouse, and we saw a hundred or more of these along the low lands that skirted the base of the higher hills. Their profusion was readily accounted for by the absence of all population in the country, except a few wandering Indians, and they cannot lessen them much in such an extensive and pathless region. They commit more havoc among the eggs than among the birds, for they can readily find these on the ground during the nesting period; and as they eat them even when they are addled, and prefer them when the chicks are developed, a person may imagine how many they can destroy in a season. When I had secured ten brace of grouse, which I did by four o'clock, I returned to camp alone, as Smith wished to make his bag as large as possible, in order, as he said, "to just blow about it" when he returned to his Eastern

home, and show them what grouse shooting in Idaho really was. The cook took the birds I had bagged, dipped them in a pail of water, and placed them, feathers and all, in the middle of a hot fire of coals and covered them with ashes. The doctor and Jones, who had been out after trout in the lake, returned with two splendid strings of fish soon after I did, and throwing them on the ground, they indulged in the most glowing descriptions about the abundance of fin in the lake, and the wonderful transparency of the water, which enabled them to see the slightest movements of the fish thirty feet below. While they were pouring out superlative adjectives, the cook was busily engaged in preparing some of their catch for dinner, and as his method was novel, I may as well describe it. He first split thick boughs into two or three parts, according to their thickness, and fastened a trout—after it was cleaned—to each part, by means of a vine which was passed around the head and tied behind the stick. The sticks, or boughs, were then placed before a hot fire, on a bed of leaves, and when the fish were cooked on one side the other was turned until they were done to a turn. This is a simple and effective mode of cooking fish in the open air, and is very popular with those who pride themselves on their knowledge of the culinary art.

When dinner was ready we attacked it without waiting for Smith, as we did not know what time he would return, and as soon as it was over we fell to recounting the adventures and incidents of the day. This is one of the great delights of camp life, and an excellent means of enlivening the dinner and making it cheerful and social, instead of a mere mechanical habit, which, however necessary it may be, is not always the most interesting part of a holiday in the forest. We were so absorbed in our tales that we forgot all about our absent comrade, and it was only when the shadows of night began to approach that

we became alarmed about him. A hasty consultation was then held, and it was decided to go in search of him, as it was evident that he was lost. We were exceedingly anxious about him, as we feared he had met with some mishap, for we well knew how numerous the wolves, cougars, and bears were, and how little the cougars thought of attacking a man if they were hungry. Lighting a jack-lamp, we seized our rifles, started into the inky forest, and commenced shouting as we went along. In the course of half an hour, perhaps, we received an answering call, and a few minutes later we were shaking hands with the vagrant punster.

"Were you lost?" asked the doctor.

"Lost! I was lost a million times. Why I couldn't tell where on earth I was, and I could not get out of a narrow circle in which I was travelling. I came back to an old worm-eaten log every time I started away from it, although I tried to change my course each time, but it was no use, so I thought my doom would be to inspect that log for the remainder of my days."

"This is no doubt a judgment on you for punning," exclaimed the doctor, solemnly; "so you had better take it to heart and turn over a new leaf."

"I would rather have died in making a perpetual tour of inspection of that old stump than relinquish such a habit," said Smith, dramatically. "Now, away, and to camp, that I may feast my eyes on the pots, for I'm awfully hungry."

To camp we accordingly returned, and found that we had not come back too soon, as the wolves were prowling about it, in hopes of being able to steal something. A few shots dispersed them in a hurry, but they retaliated by serenading us from a distance, and making our lives miserable. They even returned at a later hour, and tried to impose on our confidence, but the dogs soon scared them away, and a huge fire kept them at bay for the remainder

of the night. When Smith had dined, he threw himself on the bed with his boots on, and this elicited the remark from the doctor that nothing but a bear would go to bed with its boots on.

"I never knew a bear wore boots," said Smith calmly, as he turned over on his side and commenced snoring so remarkably well that he caused everyone to laugh heartily. We rolled ourselves up in our blankets in a short time after, and managed to sleep fairly well, despite the howling and screaming of the nocturnal animals, until the cook awoke us long before daylight next morning. After a bath in the lake we returned to camp and feasted on the delicacies placed in the ground oven the previous day, and thoroughly enjoyed them, for the roast bear was excellent, though a little coarse; and as for the deer heads, all I can say is that a person must eat them in the wilderness to appreciate their gastronomic qualities. When breakfast was over we plunged into the forest, and after marching about a mile the dogs routed a stag, but he escaped by heading for the hills and seeking refuge in the lake. Knowing that the hounds would not return for some time, we commenced still hunting, and succeeded in killing two deer and a bay lynx in the course of an hour. The latter animal was found on the lower limb of a huge pine, and from the mass of feathers on the ground we inferred that it had been feeding on grouse during the night or early morning. It was the feathers, in fact, that had revealed its position and brought it to an untimely end, and caused Smith to indulge in one of the most atrocious puns he was capable of uttering, for he said that the grouse and the lynx formed a concatenation. The doctor and Mr. Jones having decided to take the deer to camp, Smith and myself continued on our way, as we intended to devote our attention to the birds. We took the precaution to blaze the trees with our hunting knives as we went along, for fear of losing the trail, and

also of taking our bearings by the sun, as Smith said he would not have the feelings of being lost again for any amount of money.

We remained out until five o'clock, and when we returned we had twelve brace of dusky grouse, two brace of ruffed grouse, a couple of mallards, a Canada goose, and a young swan. The half-breed told us that we could bag hundreds of these latter species of birds on the lake late in October, as it was actually thronged with them, while snipes, plovers, tattlers, cranes, and herons were found in immense flocks along the shore. Besides its excellence as shooting quarters, the lake is also one of the finest fishing grounds on the Continent, as it teems with several varieties of trout, besides chubs, catfish, whitefish, and other species. Some of the salmon trout found there have a length of four or more feet, and a weight exceeding fifteen pounds, while specimens weighing one and two pounds are so common that their name is legion. I do not know of any place on the Pacific Slope that equals it as a trouting ground, except Lake Tahoe, in California, and between the two there is little choice. The fishing is poor, comparatively speaking, from June to October, as the trout seek the cold mountain streams during that period, and remain in them until the ice and the cold weather send them back to the lake again, yet a dozen or more may be caught any fine evening, and I have known two dozen to be hooked in an hour with very coarse tackle, not one of which weighed less than a pound and a half.

We caught them so rapidly from a rude raft made of logs, that we found very little sport in it, for they seemed to be only too anxious to get hooked. To vary the monotony of hooking them we tried spearing them at night, and found there was less of pot-hunting about this than in using a fly or a worm, as we gave them some chance for their lives, through our own inaccuracy of aim. By

fastening the lamp, with its fishing reflector attached, to the bow of the raft, we could see the movements of the trout thirty feet below us, owing to the transparency of the water, but the lake was so deep in some parts that the light only revealed a seeming cloud of inky blackness. In striking at trout, a person is quite liable to miss them, owing to the very deceptive manner in which the light is reflected by the water; hence he has to make a careful allowance for the shadows or he will only capture a fish by mere accident, and that the one not aimed at. The spears we used were purchased from the Indians, who had visited us, for about two dollars each, or that equivalent in tobacco and tea and sugar. The handles were about fifteen feet long, and the iron heads were inserted in such a manner that they came out of the sockets whenever a fish that was struck with them attempted to escape, but as they were attached to the handles by means of cords made of deer sinews, which were passed through a hole, it was impossible to lose them. The great advantage which this weapon possesses over others is, that the fish has no leverage on which to work, so cannot extricate itself, and that the long line attached to the end of the handle enables a man to play with his capture as he pleases, and to tire it out, if it is a large one, by a judicious system of angling, not unlike that used in landing a heavy salmon. Our highest catch with the spears in one night was three dozen, but we could have caught that number in an hour with a hook and line during the day. We preferred the excitement of the more uncertain method, however, to the assured success of the other, as we wanted amusement more than food.

The whole of the time we spent on the shores of the lake passed in the most delightful manner, for when we were not shooting or angling we were exploring the surrounding region or watching the actions of birds or ani-

mals. Our visit to this charming region was so replete with quiet pleasure that it seemed like a beautiful dream, and one from which we did not care to awaken. Previous to returning homeward, we captured specimens of nearly every edible creature in the country, and having placed some on one side, as presents for friends, we prepared a feast for ourselves of the others, and on a Sunday afternoon sat down to a dinner that would have been a credit to some of the best hotels on the Continent. In order to give those who have never feasted in the wilderness an idea of what can be procured there, I will give our bill of fare for that day.

BILL OF FARE.

Soup,
Salmon trout,
Venison steak,
Stag's head,
Bear steak,
Roast grouse,
Roast duck,
Roast goose,
Baked beans,
Mashed potatoes,
Hot biscuits,
Mountain hotch-potch,
Dace,
Baked venison head,
Venison stew,
Stewed squirrel,
Stewed grouse,
Roast cygnet,
Roast heron,
Boiled sweet potatoes,
Greens,
Butter crackers.

CONDIMENTS.

Chow-chow, Worcestershire sauce, Pickled onions.

DESSERT.

Canned peaches, apples, wild berries, tea and coffee.

Having partaken of this royal repast, we hitched up the horses, which had been feeding generously on the grass found in a glade not far distant, and turned their heads toward the settlements, but we were not out of sight of the lake before a fierce storm arose, and that place which had been a scene of the most enchanting beauty for a week seemed to have given itself completely

over to the furious gods of the tempest. The storm came on so suddenly that we were not prepared for it, and, as a result, we got a drenching before we thought of unpacking our rubber goods. The first indication we had of its approach was the cessation of all sounds, then the gentle soughing of the lake, and, finally, the deep frowning of the sky, which produced a darkness almost equal to a London fog.

This gloomy and almost death-like stillness was suddenly disturbed by a lurid flash in the distance, which was followed by a reverberating peal of thunder that seemed to make the hills and mountains tremble, while the rain poured down in inky torrents, as though the floodgates of the firmanents had been opened. As flash followed flash, until the sky appeared to be a mass of fire, and the peals boomed rapidly, like a park of artillery opening a battle, our horses became alarmed and tried to break away, but we held them steadily, and, by shouting at them, managed to make our voices heard above the roar of the tempest, and the rumbling and crashing of the heavenly batteries. This storm only lasted about an hour, but, brief as it was, it was one of the most violent I can recall. When the sky cleared up again the air was delightfully cool, and continued so until we reached our destination from one of the most delightful excursions a man can make in the wild, free West.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RUFFED GROUSE.

The ruffed grouse—General description—Size and weight—Various names—Difficult of domestication—Favorite haunts—Few killed—How the males woo—Their drumming—Deceptive character of the sound—Theories on the drumming—Drumming season—The grouse considered a weather prophet—Severe contests between the males—Feathered Knights and fair Helenas—Nests and eggs—Careful mothers—Pretentious cripples—Males are polygamous—Ruffed grouse never pack—Best time for shooting them—Wild in winter—Burrowing in the snow—How they are hunted—Best dogs for working them—Attachment of the males to the drumming logs—Different varieties of grouse—Abundance of the ruffed grouse on the Pacific Coast—Large numbers netted—The common form of trap—Lake Tahoe—Its wonders—Heavy trout—Profusion of wild fowl—A Western hunter—A fire hunt—A pugnacious stag—A young drummer—A squirrel's congress—A startled doe—How a grizzly was killed—Utility of a field-glass in searching for grouse—Our success with the birds.

The ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), which is found throughout Canada and the United States, from Hudson Bay to Texas, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean, derives its name of *Bonasa,* or little bull, from the supposed resemblance between its booming and the bellowing of a bull. This species may be readily recognized by the large ruffs of long, broad feathers on the neck, it being the only one of the wood grouse that wears them. It has a horn-colored bill, which is black at the tip; the irides are brown; and the tail, which is moderately rounded, is composed of eighteen broad, truncated feathers, about seven inches long. This grouse is devoid of the gular sacs; and the comb-like processes visible over the eyes of its congeners are replaced by a row of short, stiffish feathers. The hue of the body varies much in dif-

ferent seasons and places, ranging from rufous to chestnut and gray. The ruff feathers are usually dark-brown or black; the adjacent plumage of the neck is tipped with white; the tail feathers are tipped with gray, and have a broad terminal bar of black, anterior to which are nine or ten undulated transverse bars which are gray before and black behind. The female closely resembles the male, but is smaller; the latter attains a length of eighteen inches, and a weight of a pound and a half, while she rarely exceeds fourteen inches in length, and a weight of one pound. The ruffed grouse is known indiscriminately throughout the United States as the partridge and the pheasant, and in some portions of Canada as the white-flesher, from the hue of its meat. Being exceedingly wild and solitary in habit, it is not susceptible to domestication, for it shows greater fear of man than of the fox or hawk.

Being found only in dense woods or tangled undergrowth, and on rugged ground seamed by ravines and chasms, and often strewn with boulders, it is difficult of pursuit, and being strong and swift on the wing, and possessed of great vital power, it requires a quick eye and hard hitting to bring many to bag. Few persons can boast of bagging more than ten or fifteen brace a day, even in the forests of the Northwest, where it is most abundant, and those who shoot three or four brace in the same time, in other portions of the country, consider themselves fortunate.

It is the emblem of a bird of the wilderness, and on meeting it amidst the silent woodland depths one feels like apostrophizing it in the language of the poet, Hogg:

> "Bird of the wilderness,
> Blithesome and cumberless,
> Gay be thy matin o'er moorland and lea!
> Emblem of happiness,
> Blest be thy dwelling-place—
> Oh, to abide in the desert with thee!"

Its home is not a desert, however, but a sylvan retreat, where flowers bloom and exhale sweet fragrance, and song birds warble the whole day long, though it may also resound with the whistle of the timid deer, the growl of the bear, or the high, sharp scream of the wildcat and cougar.

Where food is plentiful all the year round, an adult male weighs from one and a half to nearly two pounds. During the berry season its flesh is white, succulent, and of a delicate flavor, but to preserve this flavor when cooked it ought to be roasted whole, not split and broiled, as it usually is in hotels and restaurants. Few birds on the continent are more interesting to the naturalist or lover of field sports than the ruffed grouse when it thunders forth its erotic lay early in the spring, amid the forest depths. It looks, when standing on a bough, like a knot of the tree, on account of the harmonious blending of its rufous or ashy plumage with the hue of the surrounding foliage. During the mating season the male presents a stately appearance, especially when he is parading up and down a log or serenading the fair sex. His ruff is then rigidly erected, the tail is spread into the form of a fan, and the wings, which are stiffened to the utmost limit, are drooped to the ground. His mien is proud and energetic, yet graceful, and his bearing is that of a gallant which is conscious of his own importance. After strutting up and down the log with all the pomposity of his family, and clucking his satisfaction at his own imposing form, he stops suddenly; then, after a brief pause, commences flapping his wings so vigorously that they produce a booming sound, which reverberates throughout the forest for a distance of half a mile or more, according to the state of the weather, and the echoing character of the surrounding region.

After drumming for several minutes, he stops abruptly, then renews it, with apparently greater force, and

keeps it up until he becomes weary. This booming, which is not unlike the roll of a kettle-drum, is very deceiving, for it sometimes seems afar off, and at other times quite near. This peculiarity has led some persons to imagine that he possessed ventriloquial power, but this is evidently a mistake, as he does not use his voice during the exercise. Many sportsmen think the drumming is produced by striking the wings against the log, which is often hollow, and a few naturalists suppose that it is caused by the violent contact of the wings with each other, or with the sides, but neither of these theories seems satisfactory, as the same sound is produced on a stone or amid heavy shrubbery. The wings being partially concave on the inner side when they are in motion, it is plausible to suppose that their extremely rapid vibration through the atmosphere, and the consequent compression, expansion, and escape of the air under them, would cause the drumming or booming which is the cause of so much speculation among sportsmen and naturalists. It certainly does not seem plausible to suppose that such a sound could be produced by beating the pinions together, against the sides, or against a log, for it cannot be heard any distance away until the wings commence vibrating very rapidly, and it increases in volume and intensity in proportion to the velocity of their movement. The drumming commences between February and April, according to the mildness of the climate in the country where the birds have their habitat, and is continued until all the fertile birds have paired. Barren hens often drum during the summer, and the young males in autumn, as soon as they separate from the mother.

The booming is heard more frequently in the morning and evening than at any other time, during the calling season, but it is persistent in cloudy days, and is often continued all night. Some farmers and hunters say that

it is always heard before rain, and they, as a consequence, look upon the grouse as the best of weather prophets. If they see the birds flying to the trees when the day is fine, they expect rain; but if they remain on the ground, though the sky should be threatening, fair weather is expected. When the males are drumming for the hens they often wage exceedingly severe battles, for one looks upon the other as a rival, whose presence should not be tolerated. A love-call is considered a challenge for the affection of some russet dame by these feathered knights, and on hearing it they answer in the most defiant manner, and boldly fly to meet the challenger. Should they encounter each other, the battle is commenced without any preliminaries, and fought with a pluck and energy worthy of game-cocks. The contest is much severer if a hen is a spectator than if she is not, for her presence seems to nerve them to the utmost limit of resistance; the result is that they fight until one is killed, or seeks safety in flight. The victor then marches away with the feathered Helena, and breathes his notes of love into her ear, even before he has recovered from the exhaustion of the fierce struggle he waged for her.

Bishop Esaias Tegner, the author of "Frithiof's Saga," wrote a poem called "Fogel-Leken," or "The Birds at Play," which graphically describes the wooings and battles of the capercailzie during the pairing period, and as his description applies almost equally well to the ruffed grouse, I give the following selection from it, as translated by Lindholm:

"Hark! now their love notes, saluting the day,
Awaken the fair ones to innocent play,
How tender those notes, full of longing so sweet,
With which the fond singer his bride doth greet!
Now courting the coy one, who's pretending to know
But little, if aught, of his grief and his woe.
List! in how sad and how mournful a strain
He telleth the heart's oft-told legend again;

Of desires immortal, of undying faith,
And an untiring hope that abideth to death!
  Oh! bard of the forest, who can thee disdain,
  While Nature thou speak'st in thy wild, gushing strain?
Love! oh, thou mystic, unquenchable flame,
Though constantly changing, yet ever the same!
  Life's creative word! Nature's e'erbeating heart!
  Ah! the highest of rapture and pain thou art
On earth as in heaven Sing happy and free,
No art in thy measures can imitate thee!
  But—all of a sudden the singer's notes grow
  Agitating and wild—he's encountered a foe!
And this rival he threatens to deadly assail;
He must drive him away over hillock and dale.
  And who can his violent wrath put to rest?
  For of war-song and battle now heaveth his breast!
Same battle's to be fought, as at Troja of old,
As an Iliad of the forest now here might be told.

"Menelaus shall fight against Paris—a bride
Is the prize to contend for—the crowd draws aside—
  Fair Helena is seated, though not on the wall,
  But high from a fir-tree, majestic and tall,
Looks down on the fight—for a mate she must seek,
Howe'er the battle may turn, between Trojan and Greek.
  With deafening war-cries ascending the sky,
  Now, breast against breast, and with fire-flashing eye,
The warriors meet, and, with thundering might,
Their death-dealing weapons employ in the fight.
  Fierce rageth the combat, and reeking in blood
  It spreads consternation and dread through the wood.
Yet the contest is short, and the battle doth cease,
When, dismayed, overpowered, Paris he flees.
  But ah! a Pandarus bends treacherous bow,
  And the loud, boasting Achean victor lieth low!

"Now victorious shouts through the forest resound;
With many accounts of brave deeds they abound!
  And the fair and the loved one is hailed with rejoice,
  Though still there is wrath in the brave singer's voice.
But it cannot abide in a fond lover's breast,
And soon, by degrees, it is soothed to rest;
  And in softened cadences floweth the lay
  Till, in faint uttered sighs, it is melting away."

Change the word "singer" in this poem to "drummer," and it portrays the wooing of the ruffed grouse in

a terse and truthful manner. Should a female answer the roll-call, instead of a fierce rival, how different is the meeting between the pair. On approaching the drumming log she moves cautiously, yet steadily, and indulges in the most coquettish antics. Looking as demure and indifferent as possible, she pecks listlessly at the leaves, scratches up imaginary worms and seeds, and dawdles on the way; but the booming music still lures her on until she reaches the residence of the drummer, but even there she feigns to be totally unconscious of his presence and to see insects on every leaf or blade of grass. The gallant musician, on seeing this russet dame, swells with pride; he raises his ruff, expands his erect tail, droops his wings until they sweep the log, and parades before her in all his pomp and glory. She lifts her mild-brown eyes, in which the forest is reflected, to gaze on his bold mien and gaudy raiment, and when he sees that she admires him he greets her with clucks of welcome, and, after giving her some more music, descends from his throne, salutes her, and both live happily until the nesting season is over, unless some rival should arrive on the scene and kick him away before he has been accepted for better or worse.

When the birds have paired, the hen builds a nest on the ground with twigs and grass, and lays ten or twelve eggs of a creamy-brown color in it. If these are hatched out she is content, but if they are destroyed she seeks the male and lays another set. This is why so many weak young birds are to be seen in October, when the early broods are as well able to take care of themselves as their parents. The habits of the hen when running with her chicks are most interesting to study. She is ceaseless in her activity, sagacious in finding food, bold and ready of stratagem in danger, and daring in her efforts to protect her little brood from all harm. When her fears are aroused, she clucks a prompt note of alarm

RUFFED GROUSE.

which her family thoroughly understands, and on hearing it they scatter and rush for shelter among the grass and shrubbery, while she exposes herself to the foe, and by a capital piece of strategy leads it away from the covert.

If a man is the object of her suspicion she pretends to be crippled, flutters helplessly amidst the weeds, and utters lamentable cries, as if she were suffering the greatest pain; but if he makes an effort to seize her she eludes him in the promptest manner, and when she thinks she has drawn him far enough away, she rises suddenly, and with a loud whirr and a chuckling cry, which might be translated as "sold again," she darts away and seeks refuge in the forest depths until she can rejoin her scattered brood in safety. The novice is likely to gaze after her rapidly retreating form in amazement and to wonder at her duplicity; and if he does not repeat her parting salute aloud, he is very liable to think it, and to consider that she was perfectly right in her statement. She may be able to impose on a person's confidence once or twice by this manœuvre, but not more, as he soon learns to appreciate her distressed condition at its true worth, and to act accordingly.

The males, like those of the domestic fowl, are polygamous, and generally have from four to six hens under their protection; but they soon tire of them, apparently, for they manifest no inclination to help them in looking after the chicks, preferring to spend their time in luxurious ease in company with other clubable bachelors, or rather temporary widowers. These bachelor parties break up about the last of August or first of September, when the chicks are able to fly well, and the males rejoin the mothers and their interesting young families, and remain with them until they are bagged by the sportsman or the broods set up house-keeping for themselves. The hawks are great enemies of the chickens, and minks, weasels, and foxes dance attendance upon the adults, and even

rifle nests of the eggs if they cannot secure the owners. The ruffed grouse being naturally solitary in habit, compared with other members of its family, is never found in large packs, but generally in broods or small coveys, and this is one reason why it is so difficult for a sportsman to make a big bag.

It affords the best sport from September to November, as it becomes very wild after that time; and its flesh, owing to the fir and spruce buds on which the bird lives in winter, acquires a terebinthine taste. It is also a difficult matter to find this grouse in winter, as it burrows a hole for itself in the snow in the more northern regions, by hurling itself into it from a certain height and striking it at an acute angle, and this hole it enlarges readily, often carrying it three or four yards into a snowbank. It is so sharp of hearing that it can detect any unusual noise quite a distance away, for it has been proved that the ordinary tones of the human voice will flush it at a hundred yards, and that footsteps in the snow, which are scarcely audible to the traveller himself, will rouse it long before he is within shooting range. Being exceedingly shy and wary, it is ready to take alarm at any uncommon sight or sound, yet, where it is little hunted, a person may approach it to within a few paces, and instead of flying away in a hurry, it may merely march before him with a stately mien until it is flushed or grassed.

Misses are frequent in shooting at it, owing to the suddenness with which it rises, and the rapidity with which its sharp and curved wings beat the air. If it escapes it should be marked down promptly, for after being disturbed two or three times it lies quite still on the branch of some gigantic conifer, as if it thought there was no necessity for alarm, or hoped to escape observation in its foliaceous retreat. When the ordinary sportsman detects its robust form amid the foliage he does not pay much

attention to the ethics of gunning, but bangs away at it, and congratulates himself if he places it in his bag. One of the greatest essentials to success in pursuing ruffed grouse is to keep a strict silence, and have a good steady dog that will work slowly and cautiously, and be satisfied to point on catching even a faint odor. No high-mettled, fast ranger will do, as the birds will not lie to him, except in the early portion of the season, and not very well then; and late in the autumn it is a very difficult matter for a dog to get near enough to a group to enable the fowler to shoot with any assured degree of success, so that he must be satisfied to take shots at all distances. Spaniels would, evidently, be well adapted to their pursuit, and so would setters trained on snipe, as this bird gives steadiness to any dog in a short time. Pointers are not fitted for this rough work, as they are too fast and nervous, and their thin coating cannot stand the briars and tangled shrubbery, and the heavy showers of dew or rain which the undergrowth pours down when disturbed by a shaking.

This grouse seems to be somewhat indiscriminate in its choice of roosting places, being equally at home on a fallen log, a tree, a fence, and even the ground. It seeks shelter in the highest trees, or the snow, during the winter, being rarely found roosting on logs. Some persons say it can swim well, but this, I should fancy, was a mistake. It is a general belief that adult males seldom leave the vicinity of their favorite drumming logs, unless they have been shot at a great deal, and that they return to them at the earliest opportunity. One reason for this belief is, that the excrementary deposits near the logs are large, and that the bark is well worn away where the birds parade.

Two varieties of the ruffed grouse have been found on the Pacific Coast, but they differ from the typical species only in a slight degree, principally in color, and that, no

doubt, is due to climate and habitat. The one known as the Oregon grouse (*Bonasa sabinei*) is darker than the *umbellus*, and the upper parts are a dark, orange-chestnut color, mottled with black—not with brown as in the Eastern species. The under tail covets are orange-chestnut, with indistinct bars of black, and an angular terminal blotch of white; and the light-brown blotches and edgings of the *umbellus* are replaced by very dark brown or black. Some specimens have dark gray tails; and others differ in plumage, being dark-brown in one section of the country, and pale-gray in another. The sabine variety is rather erratic in habit, partially migratory, and a generous feeder, its food consisting of berries, buds, fruit, insects, and grain.

The allied grouse (*Bonasa umbellus* var. *umbelloides*) differs only slightly in coloration from the typical species—not enough perhaps to class it as a variety, as its hue varies so much in different places that even a skillful naturalist would find it difficult to distinguish the two apart. The principal distinctions between them are, that the variety *umbelloides* is somewhat grayer; that the neck tufts are sometimes glossy black; and that the ground color of the tail is cinerous. This variety is found in the Rocky Mountains and in the forest stretching north and westward from it, as it has been shot throughout the region lying between California and Alaska, and in Manitoba and the country west of it, as far as the Pacific Ocean.

The grouse of the Pacific Coast commence drumming earlier in the season than those of the Atlantic, owing to the mildness of the climate. Their tooting may sometimes be heard as early as January, in Oregon and Washington Territory, and they are so persistent at it in February that they frequently keep it up all night. They are also more prolific than their Eastern congeners, and much tamer, owing to their immunity from danger, for the popu-

lation is very limited, and foxes are scarce in the woods, while they have an immense area of forest in which to dwell securely; an area which will not be intruded upon by man, to any extent, for many, many years to come.

No part of the world can compete with the regions adjoining the Pacific Ocean, north of Central California, in the abundance of the ruffed grouse, as everything is favorable to their existence, and they are not slaughtered by market hunters as they are in other parts of the Continent. Many are, however, killed and snared by the Indians, but not enough to make any appreciable diminution in their numbers. They are generally sought for in summer in places where berries are to be found; and in autumn where such mast as acorns and nuts are common; but in winter they must be looked for in trees. When some farmers find a place which they frequent either in search of food or gravel to digest it, or to enjoy a dust bath, they snare them by means of nets or traps. A very common form of trap in some portions of the country is a wooden fence two or more feet in height, and five or six hundred feet in length. This is erected near a hillside where fruit or mast is abundant, as the birds will travel long distances to feast on these dainties. The interstices of the fence having been filled with brushwood, grass, and leaves, holes having a diameter of three or four inches are made at close intervals, and nooses made of fine brass wire are suspended in these, so that nothing can pass through without being caught.

When the birds encounter this obstruction they run along its course until they meet the hole, and in attempting to pass through it they are caught so tightly that one seldom escapes. To make the certainty of the capture greater, the trappers construct narrow runways on each side of the fence, as the birds have a peculiar habit of travelling on a path in hopes of being able to get some opening that will allow them to crawl through an ob-

struction, rather than get over it by flying. Hundreds of grouse may be caught in a week by this simple device, especially if the traps are carefully looked after, and reset every time that a haul is made. These fences are the bane of sportsmen, who look upon them with such contempt that they seldom fail to hurl them down whenever they are met. Notwithstanding the numerous foes against which the ruffed grouse has to contend, it is as abundant as ever on the Pacific Coast. Looking at the character of the country beyond the Rocky Mountains, it would be safe to assert that this bird must be numerous for many years to come, and for this reason, that it can always procure a generous supply of food and ample shelter; that it increases rapidly, is solitary in habit, and very vigilant; that it has a vast and trackless empire to itself; and, finally, that population is scarce in its haunts.

I have shot the bird frequently in various sections of the Continent west of the Rocky Mountains, but the largest bag I ever made in a day was in Humboldt County, California. Two friends and myself, while passing through the country, stopped one day at the cabin of a man who shot game, principally deer and birds, for the market. His *wickiup*, as he called it, nestled in a lovely glade near a dense forest, and was five miles from the nearest house. Although this man seldom saw a human being, except when he went to the nearest town to dispose of his game, he was sociable and hospitable, and had a grim humor which was more suggestive than assertive. He thought no life compared with that of a hunter, as it was free from care and trouble, and independent in the fullest sense of the word. His idea of existence was that:—

> "If thou would'st read a lesson that will keep
> Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,
> Go to the woods and hills."

When we reached his cabin, which was built, according to his own statement, on the principle of an Irishman's church—a yard wide and a mile long—he gave us a hearty greeting, and invited us to stay with him as long as we pleased. We gladly accepted the offer for a few days, as we intended to pay him for our board by giving him all the game we should kill. As soon as dinner was over, we commenced questioning him about his life in the wilderness, and learned that he was so infatuated with it that he would not relinquish it for one of ease in any city on earth. He also gave us a sketch of his career, which was very interesting to us.

He had been, it seems, a sharpshooter in the Confederate army, but when the war was over he went West and devoted his time to hunting, and with such excellent success that he had a fair balance to his account at the bank, a fact which proved that he was wiser than most of his class. He said that he had never fired a fowling-piece, or "scatter-gun," as he called it, previous to his arrival in California, as any man who used such a weapon in Kentucky, even for snipe shooting, would be looked upon with contempt by his neighbors, and deemed an unworthy descendant of those sharpshooters who had defeated Packenham's army at New Orleans, with their squirrel rifles. He had changed his opinion about the "scatter-gun," however, after learning its value, and considered it to have no equal for shooting deer from a stand when they were driven by hounds, but he thought it could not compare with a rifle in still-hunting.

The conversation about guns, dogs, and wild animals was continued until nightfall, and was then only stopped because we were compelled to make preparations for a fire hunt among the deer; but these did not occupy much time, for all that was necessary to be done was to light a number of pieces of dried pine and carry them in a long-handled pan through the forest until we found a victim.

As I had some scruples about destroying animals in this manner, I was appointed torch-bearer, and so well did I perform my task that my companions killed two deer before nine o'clock. We then returned to camp, and were rolled up in our blankets half an hour later. If "early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise," those who go on shooting expeditions in the Far West ought to be the healthiest, wealthiest, and wisest men in the world, for they, as a rule, are up long before the dawn. Most of them have an idea that if the first sunbeams catch them asleep they will have no luck during the day, and, as a consequence, they often commence work so early that it undermines the constitution in a few years, especially if they go out without food.

Thanks to the "lightning member" of our party, who threatened to drench those who did not "turn out" promptly, we were up and stirring long before the sun appeared, and by the time its rays began to gild the surrounding forests, we were armed cap-a-pie and ready for work.

We were in the forest by daylight, and after walking about a mile, the Kentuckian espied a stag, fired at him, and brought him to the ground. He then advanced to cut his throat, but he had scarcely drawn his knife before the wounded and infuriated animal bounded to its feet and charged him. Striking him in the breast, it hurled him to the ground, stamped on him two or three times, and was apparently determined to kill him, but before it could accomplish its purpose it was shot in the heart by one of my companions. The fallen man then picked himself up in the promptest manner and commenced examining his wounds, but they were neither numerous nor severe, being confined to a contusion or two, and a rent in his nether garments that almost disrobed him, and made him the butt of many a joke during the remainder

of the day. One of my companions asked him why the buck assailed him.

"Because I didn't sing," was the grave reply.

"What has singing to do with the attack?"

"Everything; for I notice that whenever I forget to sing 'I'm a Pilgrim' the bucks try to kill me."

"They must be very musical deer in this place."

"Yes; they're about as musical as people who ask silly questions are sensible. Now, how on earth could I tell you what made that buck pitch into me, unless it was that he was too mean to live?"

"Got your mad up, eh?"

"Well, maybe you'd be good-natured if you had to go through these woods and briars like a half-dressed Highlander. You may think it very funny, but I don't. Cold winds and sharp brambles don't agree with my legs."

The serious tone in which this was uttered produced several fits of cachination, and when they were over, we *cached* the deer, and started off in quest of more adventures. The first thing in the form of game I saw was a young ruffed male grouse, which was parading up and down a log and drumming at intervals. While earnestly watching him I made a movement which caused the leaves to rustle, and this attracted his attention in a moment. Standing as still as a statue, he looked directly at me for several seconds, and when he had satisfied his curiosity he gave a loud cluck, and with a startling whirr, which seemed all the louder on account of the solemn silence of the forest, he darted away; but his joy was brief, "for he felt the fiery wound, fluttered in blood and panting beat the ground," and was in my bag a moment later. I had hardly picked him up before an old male sprung from the ground with a loud whirr, and went sailing through the trees at a rate of speed that made me think he was bound for China and wanted to get there in two minutes. I looked disappointed at missing

an opportunity for grassing him, and the Kentuckian seeing it, tried to console me by saying that it would take a rifle ball and two bottles of whiskey to bag him.

"How could whiskey help to bag him?" I asked.

"By making a fellow feel as if he could follow him. It gives a man courage to dare anything."

"Does it give you great courage?"

"Well, yes. It gave me courage enough one time to tackle a grizzly, and but for it I think the grizzly would have placed me under the daisies."

"How was that?"

"I'll tell you. I was returning one evening from Blankville, pretty well stewed in tarantula juice, and while passing through the woods I saw half a deer lying on a brush-heap. Knowing it had been left there by a grizzly, I went to the cabin, got my gun, and went back to the carcass to wait for Ephraim, for I knew he'd come back for it at night. I waited near it until ten o'clock, but I didn't feel lonesome a bit, as I had a bottle of the juice to keep me company. I was getting pretty well slewed, when I heard a thundering crashing among the dead leaves. That brought me to my senses a little, so I jumped up and got behind a tree to the windward. Although the night was very dark, I could see what appeared to be two bears pitching into the bait. I lifted my gun to fire, but the moment I put the machine to my shoulder I found I had brought my shot-gun instead of my rifle. I knew it would be certain death to shoot at the animals with that, as the shot would only sting 'em a little, enough to make 'em mad, but I was too full of whiskey courage to care for all the grizzlies in the country just then, so I up and let 'em have one barrel. That made 'em yell, and both of 'em charged me. I then gave 'em the second barrel when they were within a couple of yards of me. As they were still coming on to me like fury, I didn't know what to do, as my legs were too weak

to run a race with 'em. Not knowing what else to do, I gave a yell that was loud enough to knock down some trees. That fetched 'em, for they ran past me as fast as a yaller dog with a tin pan tied to his tail. They were awfully skeered, I tell you, for they didn't even stop to say good-night. I was mighty glad when they got out of sight, for my courage was beginning to leave me. As soon as the noise of their footfalls died away, I went to my cabin and was soon fast asleep. I was up before daylight next morning, and being anxious to see if I had hit the grizzlies, I seized my rifle, put a bottle in my pocket, and went back to the carcass. On looking at the ground I saw signs of blood, so I concluded that I had done their hides some damage. I also noticed that the footprints of one grizzly only were to be seen, though I could almost swear I saw two gigantic fellows the night before. After thinking over the matter I decided that the juice had made me see double, and that made me mad at myself, for I hate to be fooled that way. I was so mad that I said to myself, 'Now, you old fool, you must get that bear or you don't amount to shucks.' It was very foolish to think that way, but I did, so I started off on Ephraim's trail. It was very easy to follow that, as blood was sprinkled over the leaves. In about half an hour I entered a canyon, and the first thing I saw there was old Ephraim, who was lying in some bushes. His face was covered with blood, and his head must have been mighty sore, for he shook it every few moments. I was very glad to meet him, but my feelings soon changed, for on lifting his head he saw me and charged me like a mad bull. Not caring to become any better acquainted, as I don't like the way a grizzly hugs, I turned tail and ran for the top of the canyon as fast as I could. The bear was more than a match for me in a race, however, and he was soon so near that I thought I could feel his burning breath. I was so pumped in a short time that I

felt like giving up, when Ephraim stopped all of a sudden as if he were shot. I ran a little further and then looked round, and what should I see but the old fellow drinking from the bottle of whiskey which had fallen out of my pocket while I was skedaddling. 'That whiskey will be your ruin, old fellow,' said I, as I lifted my rifle and fired. The next thing I saw was the grizzly falling stone dead, with the bottle in his paws. I went up to him and found I had put the bullet through his eye into the brain. I took off his skin, but left the carcass behind, as grizzly steak is rather tough eating. But for that whiskey, old Ephraim would have killed me sure, for I couldn't have got away from him. I sold his skin afterwards for fifty dollars to a fellow who wanted it in order to boast that he had killed the bear himself; so you see that whiskey brings a man good luck sometimes, and even saves his life."

"That's the toughest bear story I ever heard," whispered a companion to me. "I might believe it, were it not for the grizzly stopping to drink the whiskey. It will do for a yarn, anyhow."

We were tramping through the forest while he was relating this tale, and though we were listening to him with deep interest, our eyes were peering in every direction for signs of game of any kind. We met nothing worthy of our attention until we reached a part where several trees had been burned down by recent fires, and there we saw a brood of ruffed grouse which were taking a dust-bath in the ashes of a burned stump. They allowed us to approach them within a distance of thirty yards before they took to the wing, and this gave a companion and myself, who carried shot-guns, an opportunity to score with both our barrels. The one that I hit with the right barrel fell dead, but the other flew into a tree and remained there until I brought it down with another shot. The remainder of the brood flew

several hundred yards and alighted on the top of a magnificent fir, which was, apparently, two or three hundred feet high. We followed them and found their retreat without much trouble, as we knew they would not deviate from a straight course in flight, and would seek refuge in the highest tree on their line.

The Kentuckian wanted the "scatter-gun men" to open fire on them, but the first shot they fired proved that they could not reach the fugitives, owing to the altitude of the tree. The riflemen next essayed it, and the hunter was successful in winging one and bringing it tumbling down. Its descent caused the others to fly away with a loud cluck of alarm, and though all fired at them, they escaped scatheless. We started after them, and soon descried them perched on a dogwood tree, and there they remained until all were picked off with the rifles, for there was no sport in shooting them with a shot gun. That brood yielded us seven tender birds, which were almost as fat as butter. The Kentuckian told me that a family of ruffed grouse could be kept in a tree until they were killed if a person talked or whistled, as the sound of the human voice either terrified or enchanted them so much that it seemed to stupefy them. We met another small pack which were feeding on blueberries, an hour later. These fled on seeing us, but they did not go far before they alighted on a tree, and there they remained until they were picked off one by one, as those on the lower perches were bagged first. I descried several others in a tall fir, half an hour after this, and managed to flush them by yelling and hurling stones at them. As they flew away in a body, and rather slowly, I was able to empty both barrels into them. I killed a leash; and my companions were proportionately successful. I was indebted to my field-glass for this score, as I could not have seen the birds without it. A field-glass is, in fact, actually necessary in wood-grouse shooting, as the plumage

of the birds resembles the foliage of the trees so much in hue that it is an exceedingly difficult matter to distinguish them apart, especially if the grouse roost high. By using my glass freely I was enabled to bag seven brace of grouse that day, most of which were shot on the wing while they were flying from tree to tree. That was the largest number I ever shot in a day, as I never killed for the sake of making a big bag. One reason for my success on this occasion was, that my companions gave me shots which properly belonged to themselves, and acted the part of beaters rather than that of friendly rivals. The birds were also remarkably abundant, and being young and inexperienced, they allowed us to approach them to within a few yards before they attempted to fly. We averaged twenty brace each during the week that we spent in that neighborhood, although we did not go ten miles from the house in any one direction. We experienced very little difficulty in killing the birds when we found them; but I must say that the majority of them were shot on their perches by my comrades.

I devoted most of the time I was in the district to studying bird life in the forest, and but for this, I would, I think, have made a better score. I was satisfied, however, as it presented a strong contrast to one I had made on a previous occasion in Pennsylvania, where three day's trudging brought me only one grouse, and that a poor creature which was almost eaten alive by wood ticks. When I left that section of California, I took away many pleasant memories, not the least of which were connected with ruffed grouse, and that fine type of a Western hunter, the hospitable Kentuckian.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SAGE COCK.

The sage cock—Its range, weight, and color—A peculiar gizzard—Bitter taste of the flesh, and how to remedy it—Can go a long time without water—Never flies to trees—Tries to escape by skulking—Strong on the wing—Very tame—The pairing season—The wooing song—Pompous lovers—The nest and young—Brave mothers—Enemies—Large packs.

The Sage Cock (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), which is a denizen of the region lying between Western Kansas and the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Ranges, is the largest of the American grouse, an adult male frequently attaining a length of thirty inches, and a weight varying from three to seven pounds. The female is much smaller, her average length being about two feet, and her weight three or four pounds. The tail is composed of twenty acuminate feathers, and equals or exceeds the wing in length; on each side of the neck are very large, dilatable air-sacs of naked yellow skin, which are bordered by a patch of curiously-stiffened corneous feathers, that resemble fish scales somewhat, and frequently end in long, bristly filaments.

The color of the upper parts of the body is a mixture of black, brown, and yellowish-gray; the sides of the lower part of the neck are whitish; and the lower portions of the breast and abdomen are black. The female and chickens differ slightly from this hue, and are deficient in the rigid neck-feathers of the males. The sexes can be readily distinguished apart at a glance by their size and markings, and their attitude when walking or staring. Old hunters say that this species has no

gizzard—a statement which is true in a particular sense, for this organ is as soft as that of birds of prey, and is almost totally unlike the hard, dense apparatus of ordinary gallinaceous birds.

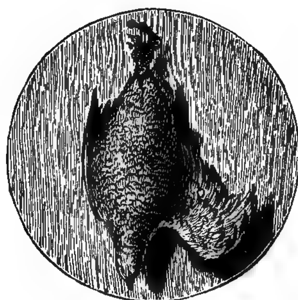
Living principally on the leaves of the so-called wild sage (*Artemisia tridentata*), its flesh has a peculiarly bitter taste, which makes it anything but pleasant, even to the palate of a hungry man; but if the bird is "drawn" immediately after being shot, and some onions and a slice or two of lemon are placed in the abdominal cavity ere it is roasted, the acrid flavor is modified to such an extent that even a fastidious person might partake of it without much grumbling. The flesh of both old and young is dry and black, so that it is not much sought after, even by hunters. Their opinion of its merits may be readily inferred from the names they apply to it, which vary from "Injun killer" to "walking quinine" and "feathered sage-tea." The birds are said to prefer the leaves of the artemisia to grain, and to be able to remain without water a long time. The latter statement may be readily believed, for I have seen them in sterile regions where no water was to be found for miles, yet they were as lively and cheerful as they could well be. They may, like the prairie chickens, be content to quench their thirst with sips of the morning or evening dew, where streams or tarns are scarce.

This species never takes to trees, and when alarmed it tries to escape by skulking in the sage, rather than by flight. When it does take to the wing, however, it rises with a loud and heavy whirr, after uttering its notes of fear, and frequently flies quite a long distance before alighting. It is, as a rule, so tame that it will allow a person to approach to within a few feet before it thinks of running away. It is almost as familiar as a barn-yard fowl, and as easily killed.

The pairing season commences in March or April, ac-

cording to the character of the climate of the country it inhabits. The males win their brides by a deep, guttural song, which sounds like whirr-whirr-whirr-hoo-hoo, and by parading their forms before them, much as gobblers do before the turkey hens. They spread the tail into a fan-like shape, inflate the neck and air sacs to the fullest possible limit, lower the wings and sweep the ground with them, and wheel and strut and sing until they have been accepted. They are the most assiduous of gallants, and to persons of a certain temperament they seem ludicrously "spooney," for their many attitudes, pompous airs, and indefatigable calling and parading, are more suggestive of ridiculous "softness" than dignified wooing. When mates have been chosen, the female builds a rude nest on the ground, generally under the shelter of a sage-bush, and lays from ten to twenty eggs in it, and when the young are hatched she devotes all her attention to them, and fights bravely in their defence, if necessary. Their greatest enemies are foxes, coyotes, badgers, weasels, and other predaceous quadrupeds, for these do not hesitate to gobble them up whenever they get the chance, their taste not being refined enough to object to the flavor of sage. As food and shelter are abundant, most of the chickens must live to adult age, notwithstanding the number of their foes, if one were to judge from their profusion on the Western plains and plateaus. The mothers and their broods keep together until the approach of cold weather, then join the males, and form into large packs, which often number several hundred. They become wild at this time, and are easily flushed, but, after alighting, they prefer trying to escape by running and skulking, rather than by flying. Not being deemed fit for the table, few persons kill them, except Indians. These frequently snare them in large numbers, especially in severe winters, when food is scarce, for anything edible, from a polecat to a rat, is welcome

at that time. I have eaten their flesh without seasoning, when hard pressed by hunger, but I must say that I found it a very difficult matter to reconcile my palate to its flavor, and that I was glad when the repast was over. I did not know at that time how to prepare it, but after learning the *modus operandi*, as previously described, I found I could partake of it with a relish, which varied in degree according to the sharpness of my appetite. The Indians eat the eggs of this species even when they contain chicks, and consider them quite palatable. The eggs are rather large, and their ground-color varies from greenish-drab to drab and buff. The sage cock is so abundant on the artemisian plains of the West and Southwest that its numbers cannot even be estimated, and it will be so for many years to come, in all probability, as few men care to take up their abode in its haunts.



CHAPTER VIII.

PTARMIGANS.

Ptarmigans—Different species—The white-tailed ptarmigan—The willow grouse, and the rock, or mountain, ptarmigan—General sketch of the white-tailed ptarmigan—Pairing season—The nest and eggs—Both parents look after the young—Brave protectors—Very tame in summer and wild in winter—Burrow in the snow—Moulting season—Are in best condition from September to November—Will not lie to a dog in winter—The willow grouse—Its haunts and habits—Resembles the Scotch moor-cock—Hue of the plumage in winter and summer—Weight of both sexes—The mating season—Nests and eggs—The male assists the female in hatching—A dutiful guardian—The number of eggs a hen can lay in a season—Difficulty of detecting the young on the ground—Migratory tours—Marital manœuvres—Food—How the birds are trapped—The rock, or mountain ptarmigan—Its haunts, weight, size, and color—Is partially migratory—Its food—Pack in autumn—General character of ptarmigans—The charge used for shooting them—A campaign among the ptarmigans—Two queer dogs—How to prevent snow-blindness—Majestic mountain scenery—A brood of ptarmigans—Our first bag—Snow baths—Croaking voices—A volley and its unexpected result—A terrified Indian—A savory dinner—Why Indians can eat so much—Strange music—Success of our excursion.

There are three recognized species of the genus *Lagopus* in the northern part of the Continent, namely, the white-tailed ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucurus*), the willow grouse (*L. albus*), and the rock, or mountain ptarmigan (*L. mutus*, var. *rupestris*), which differs only slightly from the *L. mutus* of Europe. The former, which is known as the white, and the mountain, quail in portions of the West, is the species most common in the United States, being found on all the elevated chains between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. It is the smallest of its genus, and the only one whose tail remains white the year

round; hence, it may be readily distinguished from its congeners at all times. Its plumage is pure white in winter, but in summer it is mottled with brown and tawny, except the wings, tail, abdomen, legs, and crissum. The toes are feathered about half their length in summer and autumn, and wholly in winter, the feathers being exceedingly fine and hair-like. It is most abundant in the Rocky, Cascade, and Sierra Nevada Mountains, as portions of these are wrapped in shrouds of perpetual snow.

The pairing season commences later with this species than with those which have a less arctic habitat. The nest is generally constructed in the rudest manner, of grass, leaves, or moss, and is placed in a hollow near some bush or rock. The hen lays from eight to twelve eggs, and when she is hatching she will permit herself to be captured rather than abandon them. When the young appear, both parents are most assiduous in providing food and protecting them from enemies, and so undaunted is their courage that they will even face man in their defence.

These "haunters of the herbless peak" are so tame in summer that they will allow a person to get within a few feet of them before they make an effort to escape; and when they are flushed they may fly only a few yards before they alight. They then look at the object of their suspicion, and if he does not attempt to molest them, they commence feeding as placidly as if they did not have a foe on earth; but if he makes any hostile demonstration they quickly conceal themselves in thickets or seek refuge among the rocks. They are very wild in winter, however, and ready to flush before a man can get within shooting distance, particularly if the weather is blustry and cold and the ground open. A cough, a sneeze, a word, or a footstep is sufficient to rouse them and cause them to seek safety in the long burrows which they excavate in the snow where it is anyway deep. This

habit of theirs is fatal to shooting over dogs, as it would spoil the staunchest pointers or setters in the world, for when the latter see that they will not stand a point, they become so angry that they rush into the burrows and drag out the birds more dead than alive. All the threats and shouts and whippings that a man can hurl at or give the animals for their irregular conduct will not deter them from repeating it, as they become so exasperated at being unable to wind the birds or to make them lie to a point, that they forget prudence and education in their eagerness to be successful in their work. The cold dry air of the mountains also impairs their scenting power, and makes them nervous and irritable; hence, high-mettled animals should never be employed for pursuing the birds in winter.

Ptarmigans are in a continual moult throughout the summer, and this gives them anything but a pleasing appearance, as no two seem to be of the same color; but they are in such full plumage in September that they look larger than they actually are, owing to the density of the feathers. They lie fairly well to a dog up to the first of November, and, when flushed, fly straight ahead for a few yards, then alight, and commence feeding or watching until they are bagged or routed again. They are easily flushed in windy weather, and as they rise at long distances, they afford good sport to those who like strong wing shooting. They are not worth seeking in winter, unless a man is fond of the terebinthine taste which their flesh acquires after they have lived some time on the buds of coniferous trees. The best months for shooting them are from August to November, as their meat is then fat, sweet, and succulent, their food being mainly composed of insects and berries. Dogs are necessary for finding them during this time, as they hug the ground so closely that it is very difficult to see them, and

they are so tame that they will not fly sometimes even when a person is in their midst. When the land is open they may, however, be readily detected, as their color presents a strong contrast to the surrounding rocks.

The willow grouse, or ptarmigan (*L. albus*), is only found in a few places in the eastern part of the United States, but it is very abundant in British America and Alaska, for large numbers are snared annually by the Aleutians and other tribes of the latter country. It is distinctly a northern bird, being scarce south of the forty-ninth parallel, and met with only in a few places. It is so common throughout Canada, except in the barren grounds, where it can find neither food nor shelter, that it is barrelled and shipped to London, where it is frequently sold as the Scotch moor-cock, which it resembles so much that few ordinary persons can distinguish them apart. The flesh of both looks and tastes alike in the early part of the season, but, at a later period, the bird of Scotia is deemed to be the better of the two, on account of the character of its food, which does not give it the bitter taste of the other.

The willow ptarmigan turns to a snowy whiteness in winter, the only parts which show any coloration being the tail, which is composed of fourteen glossy black feathers, with white tips; the shafts of the primaries, which are dusky-brown; and the tips over the eyes, which are scarlet-red; but as soon as the snow disappears the plumage undergoes a most rapid and decided change in hue. Isolated patches of yellowish-brown first appear among the white on the sides, and these gradually increase in size until they blend together and form a deep fulvous-brown, the head, throat, and neck assuming a cinnamon rufous, and all being barred with black. The hens do not differ much in hue from the males, but they frequently don their spring attire a fortnight earlier, so that it is not unusual to see a gallant, arrayed in his

winter robes, standing guard on some rocky elevation, while his spouse, attired in a sober dress of brown, is building her nest and making preparations for the expected family. She is somewhat smaller than the male, her weight seldom exceeding two pounds, while the latter tips the beam at two and a half pounds. The pairing season generally commences in June, but the exact time is largely dependent on the weather. The nest, which is rudely constructed of leaves, mosses, grasses, and a few feathers, occupies a natural depression in the ground, usually near some mossy tussock or sheltering crag that is capable of breaking the force of the breezes which frequently blow over the land. The eggs are deposited in this day by day, one at a time, until the full complement is laid, and then the hen devotes all her attention to hatching them. They number from ten to twenty, are of a creamy ground color, and beautifully variegated with confluent blotches of dark-claret.

This species, like the preceding, being monogamous, the male aids the female in the incubatory duties, taking her place when she goes for food, and even feeding her, it is said, if necessary. He seldom wanders far from her, and never beyond call; and when he is not otherwise engaged he mounts guard on some bush, crag, or hillock, to watch for foes. If he detects the approach of any suspicious looking object he sounds an alarm in a few loud, rough notes; and if his nest is robbed by a foe, he watches the operation from some convenient eminence, and manifests his displeasure in the most vociferous manner. The spoliation of his home does not discourage him, however, for he begins anew, and in ten days his spouse is able to resume her motherly cares, and has her young family around her after sitting for twenty-one days. Ten is about the usual number of eggs dropped if the first are destroyed, so that the most a hen can lay in a season is from twenty to thirty, the average being fifteen or six-

teen. The young, like those of all gallinaceous birds, are able to run about soon after being hatched, and from the moment they appear until the family circle is broken up, the parents pay them the most devoted attention, often sacrificing their own lives to protect them from the attacks of hawks, foxes, and even man. The best protection the little creatures have is not, however, the courage of their guardians, but that given them by nature, for so closely do they resemble the landscape that it is extremely difficult to discover them amid the grass, leaves, and moss-covered crags to which they flee for shelter when alarmed. A man may be in the midst of large packs, yet not detect them unless they begin to move about, and even then their mild, prying eyes are the first objects to attract his attention, for they may be seen when the body to which they belong is supposed to be a tuft of grass, moss, or lichen.

The birds begin their southern migration in the far north about the end of October, when the heavy snow makes its appearance, and as they travel principally on foot, their numbers are constantly increased by fresh accessions until they reach their winter home. Arrived there, they break up into groups, varying in number from six to sixty, and scatter over the country in search of food and shelter. When the indications of spring appear in March, they reassemble in large packs and march northward again, and on reaching their breeding grounds they pair off, the male, like other species of the family, winning his partner for the season by strutting before her in various attitudes, displaying his new spring dress, and calling her attention to his airs and graces by loud, rough notes. He repeats his croaking cry as often as possible every morning and evening, as if he were enamored of it, but stops it as soon as he has found a mate.

The food of this species consists of insects, berries, mosses, lichens, and the buds of willows and other trees,

the lichens being procured in winter by digging away the snow. The grouse of Alaska seem to live entirely on willow-buds in winter, judging from the fact that two handfuls of them were found in the crop of a dead bird. This makes their flesh so bitter that it can hardly be eaten by whites, and even the Indians do not care for it. To macerate such indigestible material, the birds have to use large quantities of gravel, and trappers, knowing this, they manage to capture them in large numbers during the winter with the aid of a small quantity of this precious material. The nets used by trappers in some portions of British America are about twelve feet square, and stretched on wooden frames. These are placed upon the ice of a river or a lake, about two or three hundred yards from a line of willows, and a mound of snow, which is generously strewn with gravel, is erected near the center of each. One side of the net is propped up by a stick about four feet in length, to which a very long cord is attached; this cord is next carried into the thicket, and a party of men commence beating the willows in a methodical manner, and driving out the grouse as if they were so many barn-yard fowls, for they are as tame as they can be, considering their mode of life. When they reach the opening and see the gravel heap, they rush for it in the most eager manner, and when a large number is grouped around it, one of the men pulls the string concealed in the shrubbery. This causes the wooden prop to give way, the net falls, and captures all within its limits. A party of four or five men may secure from two hundred to seven hundred ptarmigans in a day with this simple contrivance, as they catch from twenty to fifty every time it falls.

The birds are exceedingly abundant in Alaska, according to Mr. Dall; February and March being known as the "grouse months," on account of the numbers found scattered all over the country. They begin to change

their plumage in April, brown feathers then making their appearance on the neck and the edges of the wings. The Aleutian Indians capture them by hundreds at certain seasons, by using snares made of twisted sinews of deer. These are made into running loops and fastened to poles, each pole being balanced between two branches of a tree, and caught over another pole placed horizontally, by means of a small pin which is tied to the snare. Rushes are then piled on each side of the tracks in which the birds run, in order to induce them to pass through the spot in which the snare is set. Should they touch the snare, the pin is loosened, the heavy end of the pole falls, and they are swung into the air, where they hang until the Indians take them away. The number of grouse destroyed in a year by the red men cannot even be estimated, but, judging from the constant warfare waged against them, it must be very large. The birds of Alaska are not so finely flavored as the more eastern species, owing to the exclusive character of their food, which is mainly composed of willow buds. They are fond of frequenting sandy spots during the day, if the wind is not too high and biting, and at night they seek refuge in the thickets, or under the snow, into which they work their way for a distance of three or four yards, in order to secure shelter and avoid the attacks of foes. This species is partially migratory in portions of the extreme northern countries, but in Newfoundland and sections of Canada it is not so to any appreciable extent; hence, it is within easy distance of some of the smaller villages, and is quite abundant in districts remote from settlements.

The rock, or mountain ptarmigan (*Lagopus rupestris*) is much more boreal in habitat than the preceding, its favorite haunts being the region north of the fifty-first parallel. It is a regular denizen of Alaska and the north-western division of British America, and descends

as far south as Newfoundland on the eastern coast. It has been traced as far north as man has yet penetrated, in Alaska, and the probability is that its range extends far within the Arctic Circle. It bears such a close resemblance to the *L. mutus* of Europe, that it would be exceedingly difficult to tell them apart in winter, there being no specific difference between them; but in summer and autumn the latter is the more grayish of of the two. The rock ptarmigan is smaller than the willow grouse, and has a more slender and elongated bill. An adult male attains a length of about fourteen and a half inches, and a weight of two pounds, but the female seldom weighs more than a pound and a half. The summer plumage is blackish, striped with narrow transverse bars of yellowish-brown, tipped with white; the chin is whitish, spotted with black; the wings, except the middle coverts and tertials, are white; and the middle of the abdomen and the outer web of the external tail feathers are of the same hue. The Alaskan species differs from this in being of a more chestnut hue, mottled with black, and having little or no white edging. A black stripe runs through and behind the eye of the male at all seasons, but it is absent in the female. The plumage in winter is pure white, except the fourteen tail feathers, which are black, tipped with white. In this season the female differs but little in color from the male, but in summer her legs and wings, except the upper coverts, are white. The tail, excluding the four middle feathers, is black, tipped with white, the remainder of the plumage being ochreous, tipped in parts with white. All are marked with broad, transverse bars of black, especially the back, but the buff bars beneath are wider than the black. This species, like the willow grouse, is partially migratory. It retires into the thickets of the interior late in the autumn, and remains there until the following spring, when it moves north again until it

reaches its favorite summer grounds, about the middle of May or the first of June. The young broods appear about the last of June or the first of July, their birthplace being the open barrens, or the vicinity of some stream or tarn. Having comparatively few foes in their boreal home, the greater number live to adult age.

Their food consists of buds, insects, berries, mosses, and lichens, the latter two being procured by digging for them in the snow. When they are confined to a lichen diet their flesh is anything but palatable, but it makes a dainty morsel in summer, when they live on berries and insects. They are so tame at this season that they permit persons to come within a few feet of them before getting alarmed, and even when flushed, they only fly a few yards before settling down again. The parents are brave defenders of the chicks, and resort to various stratagems to protect them from foes. As soon as the broods are able to take care of themselves in the autumn, several families unite in one pack, and travel southward together, but when they return in spring they generally move in small coveys or in pairs, and resort to the same ground year after year. The inaccessible haunts of this species, like those of the white-tailed ptarmigan, are their best protection against foes, especially man, for it requires an amount of patience and hard work to capture them that few would care to manifest or endure; hence, they rarely find their way into the ordinary sportsman's bag. It is said that the true *Lagopus mutus* of Europe has been found near Repulse Bay and Wollaston Land, but the species seen there is evidently the variety *rupestris*, which resembles it so closely that few inexperienced persons can distinguish them apart. The affection displayed for their young by the ptarmigans, the excellence of their flesh in autumn, the undaunted courage of the males, which freely endanger their lives to protect those under their care, and the

manner in which they lie to dogs, make them interesting alike to the sportsman and the lover of Natural History.

The usual charge of a gun used for shooting ptarmigans, and other members of the *Tetraonidæ*, is three and a half drachms of powder and one and one-eighth or one and one-fourth ounces of No. 8 shot, but the quantity of powder may be increased half a drachm in winter, when the birds are wild. No. 6 shot may, however, be found more effective than No. 8, on account of its greater size and momentum. The coarse grain powder is better than the fine, as it has more penetration and less recoil; but good wood powder is the best of all, as it has three times the strength of the ordinary black variety, causes no recoil, makes no smoke, keeps the shot well together, and does not heat the barrels.

The most interesting campaign that I ever made against the ptarmigans was in the Rocky Mountains. The party which I accompanied consisted of a squint-eyed individual, whose face was as red as his hair, and who earned his bread by ranching, or stock-raising; an energetic young man, who loved the rifle and a life in the forest more than he did gold; and a half-breed and an Indian, who were to act as guides and *compagnons de chasse.* We were also accompanied by two mongrels, belonging to the Venus-haired man, which he called a gun-dog and a hound-dog, but which was which was a hard matter to decide from appearances. As soon as we reached the line of mosses and lichens on the mountains, I put on a pair of green spectacles, to prevent snow-blindness, but as the others had no such conveniences, they were content with smearing the parts around the eyes with wet powder, and that was equally effective.

The scene which we beheld from the snow-fields was grand in the extreme, for, stretching away as far as we could see, were towering peaks, shrouded in eternal robes of glowing white, while the vast and silent forests which

were spread out below us extended in another direction like an endless emerald ocean.

I gazed upon this landscape with a mingled feeling of oppressive awe and serene rapture, and I do not know how long I would have continued it, had not one of my companions given a whistle, to attract my attention. On looking around, I saw him pointing to some white-tailed ptarmigans that were walking along the edge of the alpine shrubbery beneath us. This pleasant sight made me forget the scenery in a moment, so I descended to where the birds were feeding and attempted to flush a small pack which were trying to hide in a low thicket, but my efforts proved futile, for the more I tried to rout them the harder they ran and skulked. Seeing that they would not rise, my red-headed friend shouted to the "hound dog:" "Hi at 'em!" and that animal dashed at them, loudly barking. He flushed the greater number, but they had scarcely begun to ply their pinions before five of them fell before the barrels of our guns.

The Venus-haired man, who was known as Jabe, suggested the routing of the others. I agreed, so we commenced beating the shrubbery in a methodical manner and "shooing," but the more we "shood" the more the birds skulked and tried to conceal themselves, some of them running around the clumps of miniature shrubbery much as a wood-pecker would go round a tree. Being unable to follow them through the thicket, I fired at the head of one which I saw dodging about the center of a bush and bagged it, as I wished to secure it as a specimen. My feelings reprimanded me severely for this bit of vandalism, but I learned that my companion had no compunctions of conscience about shooting birds on the ground, his excuse being that if they would not rise when he wished, he was content to kill them in the position they liked best. He bagged two of the skulkers, and his comrade three. These birds, except my speci-

men, were handed to the half-breed with instructions to take them to camp and cook them for dinner, while we continued our tramp in search of more game. We travelled about half a mile along the line of the forest until we came to a deep ravine, and there espied quite a large pack which, with wings extended, were fluttering and working away, and enjoying a snow-bath just as their wood and prairie congeners would enjoy a dust-bath. This action proved to us that they were very hot-blooded, and that they were full-blooded we had cause to know, for they bled most copiously when shot, and made the ground look as if a terrible slaughter had taken place there. While they were "snowing" themselves, some were calling to each other or clucking their sense of enjoyment. Their voice was not very pleasant, however, as it consisted of a grating or croaking sound which was extremely harsh and unmusical. This croaking reveals their position very often when they would otherwise remain undetected, especially in foggy weather, and if a person is then accompanied by a good dog he may kill them easily, as they are loth to take wing. After watching the pack for some time, we flushed them—or at least as many as we could, for some ran off on foot—and bagged three brace with six barrels. Following up those which depended on their fleetness to escape, we managed to knock over a few more and to force the remainder to fly to the forest for safety.

Picking up the slain, we started after the fugitives, but we had not proceeded more than a few yards before we were startled by a thundering report behind us, and on looking round we saw a mass of snow rushing down the mountain side to our right rear. As we were safe where we stood, I watched it with much interest, though with bated breath, until it disappeared in the canyon, some distance below us; but its rumbling roar, as it went crashing down the precipice, greeted our ears for some time

afterwards, for every tree, shrub, rock, and peak seemed to echo it in thunderous tones for several minutes. The Indian who remained with us was evidently frightened at this unusual phenomenon, though his fear was not the result of any apprehensions about death, for Indians are indifferent to that, too often, but it was rather a sense of alarm that nature—or what is the same thing to him, the bad spirits of the other world—was angry at us, and intended to do us some mischief. The ice-bound billows of the mountains, the towering pinnacles and rolling plains of snow, the crash and rumble of the thunder and the play of the lightning, the loud blast that sweeps the rugged hills or gives the forest a deeply agitated voice, even the goats that flit like white spectres among rocks and chasms, are, to the savage, the handiwork or expression of good or bad spirits, and when he sees or hears them in any unusual form he becomes frightened, although he may silently adore them.

While returning to the forest, we saw a flock of mountain sheep some distance to our right, but as we were separated from them by a deep chasm, we made no effort to shoot them, much as we might have liked to do so. The Indian looked upon their presence as a good omen, and expected that we should be fortunate in our enterprise, but this, like other superstitions, turned out to be wrong, for bagging ptarmigans was not the aim of our expedition. Soon after entering the woods we flushed another pack of white-tails, and bagged seven, and from that time until we returned to dinner we picked them up in ones and twos until we had secured twenty-one brace. The Indian did not consider this good work, however, for he said that some of their boys had frequently killed nearly twice that number in a day when the birds left the higher latitudes, in winter, and sought refuge in the regions below, where the snow was not so deep and food was more abundant. Ptarmigans remain at a

very high altitude in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Ranges the year round, owing to the vastness of the forests, the ease with which plenty of pabulum, in the form of spruce and fir buds, can be procured, and the many opportunies afforded for securing shelter and avoiding foes. The first birds we had shot were made into a savory stew by the half-breed, by boiling them with salt pork, flour, potatoes, onions, and biscuits. This was so appetizing that we did it full justice, for, owing to our tramping and the bracing air of the mountains, we ate to an extent that would have been repletion under other circumstances.

Feeling satisfied with our inner consciousness after this repast, we threw ourselves on the ground near the fire and devoted an hour to the postprandial pipe and to watching the Sons of the Forest as they gulped down their food, much as a hungry dog would swallow a piece of fresh beef. They worked long and earnestly at the filling process, and ceased only when there was no more to be devoured. Indians are, perhaps, the greatest gormandizers on earth, and can eat an amount of food that would kill white men. One cause of their capacity is due, no doubt, to the fact that they live largely on wild roots and vegetables, and as great quantities of these must be eaten in order to give the body nutrition enough to support it for any length of time, the abdomen becomes distended to an unusual extent, and will carry a cargo which that of a pale-face cannot even approach. Notwithstanding his capacious maw and readiness to eat at all hours, an Indian can go without food a long time, and bear hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and other privations which would kill a pale-face. He can march rapidly and fight well on a little pemmican, fish, or bread made of cowse or camas roots; and a hearty dinner seems to last him two or three days. After we had enjoyed our hour of repose, Jabe gave the signal for another start, so

we moved off in a body and commenced examining the country and carefully noting its crags and soil. Much as we were interested in this work, we did not forget to pay particular attention to any game worth shooting, but the only kind we met at that altitude were ptarmigans, and they were quite numerous, comparatively speaking.

We encountered them in small packs in the forest, on bare, rocky patches of ground, and on the snowfields, and experienced little difficulty in detecting them, owing to the contrast in hue they presented to their surroundings; but when they were scattered in places where rocks and shrubbery abounded, we were less successful, especially if they remained quiet, which they generally did until the dogs were almost upon them; and even then they seemed, in many cases, to consider their canine foes as mere harmless visitors whose actions they could not understand. The greatest trouble we had with them was to make them take to the wing, for when the hound was sent to flush them only a few would rise, the remainder preferring to skulk among the rocks or in the undergrowth, and keep skulking until they were shot out of mere irritation. We were so weary from our arduous climbing, tumbling, and prospecting during the day, that we retired to bed soon after supper, but we were not long asleep before we were aroused by a cold breeze, that swept through the forest with a force that made every tree and shrub moan weirdly, as if it were inhabited by wailing sprites. As the gale increased in violence we were startled into a most active condition of mind by a deep, reverberating sound, not unlike that produced by a grand organ, which rolled towards us in swelling volumes from the direction of the precipice. We listened attentively to this for some time without being able to detect the cause, for it was sometimes low and soft, then loud, vehement, and resonant.

The peals were so emphatic and stentorian that it

seemed to us as if Boreas were practising on a gigantic cornet, and after a little investigation we found we were right in our surmises, the cornet being nothing less than the chasm in our vicinity. These trumpeting precipices are quite familiar to those who have frequented high mountains in the West, but the best known is a ravine in the Cascade Range, which is said to be a natural Æolian harp, and superior to the one in the Hartz Mountains, in Germany. The gale subsided about midnight, and we fell asleep. The energetic member of the party was up before daylight, and after building a fire he commenced routing the others, tumbling Jabe on the floor.

Seeing that resistance would be useless, Jabe dressed himself, by merely putting on his boots and hat, and then calmly said that some men were meaner than "yaller dogs." Without waiting for an answer to this, he started for the mountain with the camp-kettle, filled it with hard-pressed snow, and having hung it over the extemporized crane, made of cross-sticks, he commenced rubbing the guns, which had been freely washed with vaseline the previous evening. By the time he had finished this work, breakfast was announced, and we were soon doing justice to roast ptarmigan and fried pork, and some excellent coffee, which had never known adulteration. When the repast was over we started for the chasm, but we had not proceeded far before a heavy fog arose and covered everything with such an impenetrable pall that we could not see ten paces ahead of us. It was therefore decided to return to camp for the day, or until the mist cleared away, but we found it no easy matter to do this, for the fog was deepening so rapidly that we had to stoop close to the ground to track our own footsteps.

We remained in camp all day, but were out early the next morning, and at work in a chasm by seven o'clock. We shot birds and examined the country in that region for four days, and then started homeward, disappointed

in one way, but highly pleased in another, for we had bagged over fifty brace of ptarmigans, and a black bear. The only fault we found with the birds from a sportsman's standpoint was, that they would not flush well, were too tame, and preferred skulking in thickets to running in the open. We shot two brace with our revolvers one slightly foggy morning, as they seemed so loth to flee from us that it would have been mere butchery to have used our guns. The number of ptarmigans on the snow-clad chains of the West is nothing compared to what it is in Alaska and some portions of British Columbia, for any ordinary shot can bag from twenty to thirty brace in a day during the months of August and September in these countries. Alaska is specially famous for its white-tails, and as the willow and rock ptarmigans are almost equally common, the birds may be found from the coast valleys to the hoary-headed mountains. I have heard that the birds are unusually abundant in the northern parts of Idaho and Montana, and denizens of the haunts of the mountain goat in the Snowy Range. I travelled through this Range in 1874, but I met only a few of them, although dusky grouse were quite common. While I was wandering about one day in Montana, I saw a pack of ptarmigans on the edge of a pine forest, which was so densely strewn with fallen trees and leaves that I found it rather difficult to pick my way through it in places. Wishing to flush the birds and get a shot at the same time, I decided to startle them by jumping suddenly in their midst from a large prostrate tree, behind which they were trying to conceal themselves. I therefore cocked both barrels of the gun noiselessly, crawled up to the huge log, and bounding on it, shouted at them. The next thing I knew was that I was buried in the tree, that both barrels of my gun had been fired accidentally, that millions of ants seemed to be running up inside my trousers and

burning me with red-hot irons, and that showers of rotten wood filled my eyes, hair, and mouth. I struggled wildly to extricate myself from this improvised coffin, but the harder I struggled the more difficult I found it to clear myself from the debris, as every bit of the wood I touched gave way beneath my weight. I did, however, succeed in getting out finally, but not until I had kicked the rotten wood about and under me into something like a solid body by my floundering. When I got on my feet, I waltzed around in lively style, as I had to disrobe as rapidly as possible to shake off the debris and the innumerable ants with which it was filled, and which seemed to take delight in scalding me, until certain parts of my body looked as if I had the measles or the *septenus psoriasis.* On finding myself clear of the insects, I returned campwards, cold in mind but fiery in feelings, especially in the legs, and did not go out again until the smartings of the cuticle had vanished.

CHAPTER IX.

QUAILS.

Quails—The California quail—General sketch—Its haunts and habits—Best time for shooting it—Quail dogs—Uninjured birds attack the cripples—The Valley, or meadow quail—Its haunts, habits, and color—Is very prolific—Vast numbers poisoned in California—Very destrcutive to green crops—Pack in September—Its faults as a game bird—The best method of bagging it—Quail traps—Average weight of quail—Gambel's partridge, or Arizona quail—Its haunts and habits—Moults twice a year—The blue colin, or scaly partridge—Its haunts and habits—The Massina quail—General sketch—The migratory quail—The best way of releasing bevies—The Virginia quail, or Bob White—Its range and colors—The Florida and Texas varieties—Nests and eggs—Cautious chicks—Tricks of the mother to guard her young—Quail associate with barn-yard fowl and breed in confinement—Affectionate males—Food—Favorite feeding grounds—Their resorts in fine, rainy, and snowy weather—They double like a hare—The "running" season—Their mode of sleeping—Their enemies—The best season for quail shooting—Do quails withhold their scent—Abundance in the West—Large bags—Easily killed in the early portion of the season—Charge for a gun—Best guns for shooting them—A trip after quail in Nebraska—The penalty for missing a bird—A martyr to duty—The best side of a hedge in quail shooting—A pot shot—Why prairie wolves howl—A poetic effusion—Success of our trip—How to feed dogs on a shooting expedition.

The sub-family *Odontophorinæ*, to which quails belong, has a large number of representatives on the American Continent, about forty species in all, but the majority of these are confined to Mexico and Central and South America, there being only six species and two varieties in the United States. All are pretty, and some are very handsome, especially those found in the regions adjoining the Pacific Ocean.

The California quail (*Oreortyx pictus*), which is also known as the plumed and the mountain quail, is the hand-

somest representative of the *Perdicidæ* found on the Continent, and also the largest, an adult male having a length of twelve inches. The wings and tail and the posterior half of the body are a rich olive-brown above; below a purplish-chestnut, barred with tawny, black and white, the forepart being a rich slate-blue, and the throat a purplish-chestnut. The crown is ornamented with two slender, keeled feathers, which attain a length of four inches in the male. This beautiful creature has a soft, musical voice—at least the male has—and its crowing note of *coo-ee-coo-ee!* sounds pleasant among the shrubbery of the silent hills. It is found throughout the hilly districts of California and Western Oregon, and a few are scattered in parts of the western division of Washington Territory, its eastern limit being checked by the Cascade Range. It is found at an altitude of six thousand feet on some of the mountains, which is about the line of perpetual snow in portions of the Cascade Range. It is a very shy bird, and one of the hardest on the Pacific Coast to bag, on account of its skulking habits, the difficulty of flushing it, the manner in which it runs before a dog, and its custom of rushing for cover when started. It requires a large experience to kill many plumed quails in a day, as they fly so strongly and rapidly that a good deal of the shooting must be snap shots. They nearly always run up hill when fleeing from any object that alarms them, and as they are fleet of foot, a man must make haste if he would get a shot at them. The best time for bagging them is when the snow is on the ground, as their tracks are then plainly discernible, and the cold induces them to run or fly rather than skulk. The first requisite for shooting them successfully on the wing is a steady setter that will retrieve, and keep close to the gun, as a wide ranging dog flushes them too soon. A bevy will not lie before the steadiest veteran until they have been broken up two or three times, and even then they cannot always be relied

on, owing to their timid disposition. They must therefore be scattered before a person can bag many. One of the surest ways of getting a shot at them is to go above the place where they are seen and send a well-trained dog to flush them. On seeing him they rush out singly, in pairs, or in small bevies, and run up the hill as fast as they can, and if the sportsman is carefully concealed he may then flush them and count with both his barrels. I have killed seven out of a bevy of thirteen by this stratagem, and an acquaintance of mine bagged nineteen out of twenty-seven. The dog employed for working them up should be very slow, and taught to beat the shrubbery in the most careful manner.

One of the strangest characteristics of this bird is the fierceness with which a bevy will attack any of its members which may have been wounded. The uninjured seem to forget their danger in their animosity against the unfortunate, for they will continue an assault upon a crippled comrade until several are laid low by the fowler. I have heard two or three men who are well acquainted with the habits of the birds say that they do not assail the wounded unless the sportsman is out of sight, and that they desist the moment they see him. I have never met a person who could satisfactorily explain this peculiar trait in their character, if I except a philosophic individual, who said it clearly proved that they were closely related to some types of humanity, "because they only attacked the helpless or those who could not retaliate."

The Valley, or meadow quail (*Lophortyx californicus*), is a resident of California, Oregon, and Washington Territory, but is not found east of the Rocky Mountains, unless it has been transported into the region recently. It is smaller than its mountain congener, but its plumage is equally as handsome, and its flesh as tender. It frequents hillsides, wooded gulches, chaparral, and the low

vales adjacent to cultivated ground; and, unlike its Eastern cousin, the Bob White, or Virginia quail, roosts in the thick cover of scrub oaks and other shrubbery, instead of squatting on the ground. This bird has a fine crest of from six to ten keeled, black feathers, about an inch in length, which curve forward at such an angle as to give it a jaunty appearance. The male has a small white line from the bill to the eye; the forehead is whitish, with black lines; the occiput is brownish; the general hue of the upper part is ashy, with a strong olive-brown gloss; the forebreast is slaty-blue; the under parts are tawny, deepening centrally into an orange-chestnut; and the vent, flanks, and crissum are tawny. This quail is rarely found in deep forests, in low swampy ground, or where water and vegetation are scarce. It congregates in large flocks in autumn, and, when flushed, takes to trees, and as it flies rapidly, a person must handle his gun promptly to kill it ere it can reach cover. Being very prolific, it has, thus far, defied all the efforts of poisoners, pot-hunters, and trappers to exterminate it. Some persons say that it raises two broods in a season, the second appearing in August or September. This seems probable, as very young birds are frequently seen in the latter month. It is so abundant in Southern California that large numbers are poisoned annually with strychnine, which is scattered over the fields they frequent. The cause of this wholesale destruction is said to be on account of the injury they inflict on vineyards, and on such green crops as peas and beans, as they eat the sprouts with avidity as soon as they appear above ground. Some persons think that the grapes the birds eat are a mere nothing compared to the numbers of insects they devour, and which, but for them, would destroy the vines.

Quail were so numerous in California a few years ago that it was no uncommon thing for a sportsman to

start from San Francisco in the morning, and return the same evening with a bag of fifty, sixty, or seventy-five birds, but over the same ground at the present time it is sometimes difficult to bag a dozen in a day's shooting. In the southern counties, however, where no restriction is placed on quail shooting, splendid sport can be enjoyed, as the birds exist in thousands and are as tame as chickens in a farm-yard. The fault with most inexperienced sportsmen in shooting valley quails is that of firing too quickly and before they have fairly covered them. In shooting over a dog, the gun should be carried at a "ready," and when the birds are flushed, a prompt and decided aim should be taken, and the trigger pulled gently while the gun is in motion—or in "swing," as the hunters say. This "swing" is absolutely necessary for bagging them, being far preferable to snap-shooting —that is, pulling the trigger as soon as the gun touches the shoulder. The most effective method of destroying the birds in California is by trapping. The trap generally used is that known as the figure four, which is sure and noiseless, and does its work so thoroughly that half a dozen similar machines, well attended, would not leave a quail in a large extent of country in a week. One of them is more destructive than twelve guns, as escape from it is impossible. Some of the quails weigh nine ounces, and I have known a few to go as high as ten, but the average weight is between five and eight ounces.

Gambel's partridge, or Arizona quail (*Lophortyx gambeli*), is found in the south-western portion of the United States, its range extending from the thirty-fifth parallel to Mexico, and from Texas to the Colorado River. It is very abundant in Arizona and New Mexico, and seems to be equally at home on the parched deserts and the rocky hills. It is, according to Archer, larger than the Virginia bird, approaching more closely in size to the California, or valley colin, but from which it is easily distinguished

by the lack of the white basal line. Its extreme length is about nine and a half inches for the adult male, with an alar extent of from thirteen and a half to fifteen inches. The tail is four and a fourth inches long, and the tarsus one and one-fourth. The bill is black, the eyes are brown, and the feet gray. The general color of the body is a grayish-ash, with plain white abdomen, and a broad white edging on the upper webs of the tertials, the elongated feathers on the sides being of a bright chestnut.

The male presents more of a leaden or bluish hue than his spouse; the white beneath is strongly tinged with reddish or orange-yellowish; and a black patch is observable upon the abdomen. The throat and anterior half of the head are black, deep and glossy, bordered behind by two broad, well-defined stripes of white, the upper of which crosses the middle of the vertex, and then follows backward above the auriculars to the occiput, while the lower begins at the posterior angles of the eyes joining upon or near the vertex. The top and back of the head is of a bright reddish hue, bordered anteriorly with black. The female may easily be distinguished from the male by her smaller size, being nearly an inch less in length, and lacking the pure white, black, or red about the head, and the black spot upon the abdomen. Her colors, too, are much more cinerous, with little or no bluish cast. Both sexes have the crest, or plume, which adds materially to their elegance and beauty, though that of the female rarely exceeds an inch in length, and the feathers composing it are of a sober brown, and less recurved. This appendage in the male is half an inch, sometimes a full inch, longer than that of the female, of a glossy, jet-black hue, and tends to give him a very jaunty appearance. The crest is freely movable and subject to voluntary control, and though usually carried erect or with a slight backward inclina-

tion, it may sometimes be seen falling forward over the bill, and again resting quietly upon the neck.

The number of feathers composing it are variable—generally from four to six, more rarely ten, and all club-shaped, and curved slightly anteriorly; the webs are loose and bend backward from the shaft, each feather being imbricated, or overlapping, the whole being packed into a single fascicle in this manner. This ornamental appendage appears at an early age, evidences of it being easily detected when the chicks are but a few days old, and sometimes before the first true feathers of the tail and wing can be noticed. It springs from a single point on the vertex immediately behind the transverse line that crosses the head from eye to eye, and, at first, consists of a mere tuft of three short brown feathers, without being curved or club-shaped in appearance, or having the intimate association with one another which they possess later.

In their downy state the chicks are very pretty little objects, and, as far as markings are concerned, do not bear the slightest resemblance to their parents. The bill is of a bright reddish hue, the upper mandible being the lighter and having more of a pinkish tinge; the feet are flesh-colored; the head is yellowish-brown, with a pure white spot upon the nape, and a few black feathers on the crown, each streaked with white; the upper parts are tawny or brownish-gray, mottled and clouded with black, and conspicuously streaked with long, narrow, penciled, whited-white lines; the primaries are dusky, marbled with lighter and darker colors on the outer webs; the throat is whitish, and all other under parts are marked with narrow, blended, transverse bars of black and yellowish-white. The little things in this condition are about three and a half inches long, and may be found up to the last of August, though by this time most of the summer's brood are partly grown.

The nest of this species is a simple affair, being merely

a slight excavation, lined with grass. The hen lays in this every day a yellowish-white egg, marked with brown spots, until the usual number, which varies from ten to twenty, is deposited. She sits on these for three weeks, seldom leaving them, even to go in search of food, and while she is absent her place is taken by the male. Both parents look after the chicks when they appear, and carefully guard them against foes. When they become suspicious of any object, they utter a clucking sound, which causes the little creatures to seek shelter immediately. The male resorts to various stratagems to lead the foe away from them, but the mother usually conceals herself until the danger is passed, and then calls them to her side with endearing clucks. Although the young can fly well when two months old, they, like most gallinaceous birds, prefer to use their feet until they are hard pressed, and then they take to the wing, though reluctantly. They moult twice a year, but they never lose feathers enough to prevent them from flying quite rapidly. When they are in full plumage, and their crests are waving, they present a handsome appearance, especially when walking, as their carriage is firm, erect, and graceful.

The blue colin (*Callipepla Squamata*), which is also known as the scaly partridge, sand partridge, and sand quail, is more southern in its range than any of the *Perdicidæ* found in the United States, being a resident of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. It has a short, full crest; is grayish-blue above, and paler below; the sides are striped with white, and the whole plumage is marked with semicircular black edgings of the feathers, which give it a scaled appearance. The inner edges of the inner quills and the end of the crest are white, and the under tail coverts reddish-brown, with dark streaks. This quail, like all the western and south-western species, prefers to trust for safety to its powers of

running, rather than to those of flight. No difficulty is experienced in getting shots at it, the great trouble being to start it from the ground. The blue colin is the only species of the genus *Callipepla,* or the beautifully-robed, found in the United States. It has many of the characteristics of the *Lophortyx,* or valley quail, but the crest is different, being tufted, fuller, and softer, and composed of short, broad, depressed feathers that spring from the crown. The wing coverts are normal, the tail is stiffened, and averages about three and three-fourths inches in length, and the claws are small and acute.

The colin is rather small, seldom exceeding nine and a half or ten inches in length, and weighing about ten ounces, so that it is nearer the Virginia quail in size than any other species. A writer whose name I do not know, but who seems to be acquainted with the general habits of this bird, says, that though it inhabits the same region as Gambel's, or the helmeted colin, the two never mingle or even come close to each other. "It has been observed commingling with the south-western variety of the *Ortyx virginianus* (*Ortyx texana*) in Texas, where it is said to resemble the latter bird somewhat in habits, and, further, to breed with it, though we have failed to obtain any description of the hybrids, or positive information as to their existence. At all events, the manners of blue colins do not seem to differ very materially from those of other American *Perdicidæ,* though their cunning and instinct seem vastly superior to some of the species. Among their enemies, besides the usual birds of prey, may be rated wolves, opossums, and raccoons, which destroy their eggs; tarantulas, which kill and devour the chicks; ocelots, yaguarundi-cats, pumas, jaguars, peccaries, foxes and snakes. The so-called "cotton-mouth" snake, the rattlesnake, and the burrowing owl also destroy and devour the cheepers and eggs when they

can be obtained. If unmolested, the birds are said by the Mexicans to attain to an age of from fifteen to eighteen years, as proved by individuals brought up in confinement from their downy stage, although fifteen years is supposed to represent the average life of the *Perdicidæ*, according to the computation of Pallas. Their movements are very rapid in captivity, and they exhibit unusual suspicion, alertness, and timidity. The Mexican naturalist, Don Pablo de la Llave, says he repeatedly attempted to rear the blue colin in cages, but that, though he fed them himself, and constantly ministered to their wants, he could not accustom them to his presence, and that they appeared to become more wild, intractable, and suspicious day by day, and when the experiment was persisted in, that they finally pined away and died of a disorder closely simulating nostalgia.

While colins may be met with occasionally on rocky ground, it is probable that they frequent such regions only when they afford sustenance to mesquite bushes, as they seem especially partial to the presence of this form of vegetation. The plains and grassy mesas are preferred to rocks and hills. They are found on all plains where parpalum and mesquite grasses grow, and amongst the groves of acacia, prosopis, nispalos, and mesquite. They are, it is said, very partial, in the more northern regions of their habitat, to the so-called prairie dog towns, though these usually embrace large tracts destitute of vegetation. For lack of a better cause to which to assign this strange preference, the birds are supposed to be drawn thither by the abundance of favorite insect food.

They are also at times, and particularly toward the close of summer or early autumn, found to cover large tracts destitute of all forms of vegetable life, especially open, sandy plains, though these, usually, are not far removed from either grass or water. They are probably capable of existing for considerable periods of time

without water, as Doctor Heermann remarks that the few he met were found on the most sterile and arid portions of his route.

In Southern Arizona they are likely to be met with in chaparral, and among the mesquite bushes and larrea; but in Northern Sonora, though exhibiting a preference for the same vegetation, their haunts are the more elevated tablelands.

The Massena quail (*Cyrtonyx massena*), which is the gentlest and most unsuspicious member of its family, is about the size of the Bob White. The male has a beautiful crest; his head is curiously striped with black and white; the upper parts of the body are touched with tawny, black, and white; and black spots are scattered over the wings. The under parts are black, purplish-chestnut along the middle line, and dotted with numerous circular spots. The tail is short, and the claws are exceedingly large. This species has the same habits as its kindred, except that it is so unsophisticated as to show no fear of man, and to allow him to approach to within a few feet ere it thinks of moving away.

The migratory quail (*Coturnix vulgaris*) having been introduced into the country recently, is now found in various sections far apart. The best way for letting colonies of these birds loose, after their arrival from Europe, is to release them near water and where the fields are open. The box in which they are confined should have a door cut in one end of it, so arranged that it can be pulled open by a long string attached to it. The box containing the birds ought to be carefully carried to the place of release, put upon the ground, and some seed scattered in front of the door. The man should then retire, unwinding his string as he goes, to a distance of at least fifty yards, and get out of sight behind shrubbery, or by lying flat on the ground. The birds should be given a few minutes to recover from their fright.

Then, if the door is quietly pulled open by the long string, they will generally step out, one at a time, pick up the seed, flap their wings, bask in the sun, caress each other, and finally run off into the shrubbery. The box should not be approached until the next day, and care ought to be taken that grain enough to support the birds for a day or two is scattered in its vicinity.

The quail of the Atlantic States (*Ortyx virginianus*), which is also known as the Bob White, and in the Southern States as the partridge, is abundant as far west as the Rocky Mountains, and even beyond that chain now, as it has been introduced into Utah, Oregon, and other places. This species has lengthened feathers on the crown which can be erected into a crest; a line over the eye; the throat is whitish, bordered with black; the vertex, neck, and breast are brownish-red, the remaining under parts being white and marked with black crescentic bars; and the sides are streaked with brownish-red, the upper parts being varied with tawny, black, gray, and chestnut. The color of the female is paler than that of the male, and the forehead, throat, and the line over the eye are buff instead of white. There are two varieties of this species in the South, one being confined to Florida, and the other to Texas. The difference between them and the northern bird is not very great, and consists principally in the smaller size and darker plumage of the variety *floridanus*, and the paler and grayer hue of the variety *texanus*, which is the common bird of Texas.

The nest of the quail is a common affair, being merely a slight excavation or a natural depression in the ground which is lined with dry grass and a few feathers. The hen lays from fifteen to twenty-four white eggs, and sits on them three weeks, generally hatching all of them. When the young appear they are able to leave the nest, and though they are veritable mites of down, they

are able to follow their mother. They are exceedingly cautious little creatures, for the moment the old bird sounds an alarm they scatter in every direction and hide in the grass until the reassuring voice of their guardian summons them to her side. If a dog or a cat approaches the brood, the mother pretends to be wounded, and flutters far enough ahead of it to keep out of harm's reach, and when she has led it some distance away from them, she rises in the air with a cluck of joy and triumph, and returns to her family, which she soon gathers about her by endearing calls. Although the quail is a timid bird, yet it has been known to associate with the barn-yard fowl, especially in winter, and to remain around the outhouses of a farm for weeks at a time. Its eggs have also been hatched by a hen, and the chicks followed their foster mother until the ensuing spring, when, through some overpowering instinct of nature, they left her and sought their free companions. Instances are known, however, in which the birds were not only content to remain in confinement, but also to lay eggs which proved fertile when hatched under a bantam hen or either of the parent quails. It is often rather difficult for a captive female to hatch her own eggs, as the male dallies with her so much, and uses all his powers of fascination to such an extent, that he frequently induces her to desert her nest, in order to prolong the love season. The Virginia quail has two broods in a year if the weather is fine and the summer long, but in the more northern regions it raises only one, unless the first eggs laid should be destroyed, and then it may try to raise another. While the female is hatching, her mate sits on a shrub or a fence close by, and whistles his soft notes of "Bob White" by the hour, as if he were encouraging or comforting her with words of endearment. Although the bird derives its ordinary name from these two notes, yet it has a variety of others which it uses when a bevy

assembles or when it meets its kindred out for a promenade.

The quail eats grain, insects, and sometimes grapes, but it is content with a very small quantity of the latter food, hence the statements made against the valley quail in California, that it destroys vineyards, are partially founded on a misapprehension. To poison it by the thousands on this ground would therefore seem to be wrong, for it often more than atones for any harm it may do by the quantity of chinch bugs and other insects it destroys, and which, but for it, would lay waste the grain fields. The favorite feeding resorts of the Bob Whites in fine weather are the stubble-fields which are close to water. They frequent these each morning and evening, but seek cover in the bushes, hedges, and fences during the day. They lie in concealment nearly all day in rainy weather, and if tracked by dogs they try to escape by running, so that a man may have to follow them for several hundred yards before he can get near enough to flush them. They hie to the timber for shelter in snowy weather, but return to the fields in a day or two after the storm has ceased. If they are flushed then they will fly for the first convenient cover, and try to hide, or to escape by running through the bushes as fast as they can. They often double like a hare on such occasions, and give a dog—unless he is exceedingly staunch and keen-nosed — a great deal of trouble to trail them.

If one of the bevy calls soon after seeking shelter, a person may expect all to flush again in a short time, as it is a proof that they do not like their refuge. Should the sportsman desire to know their place of retreat, in case they keep silent, he can learn it by uttering their call, as he is almost sure to receive an answer, especially in the early part of the season. The call must be correct, however, or it will only make them scamper off. When the

cold weather approaches, and the ground becomes frozen, quails frequent the more open stubble-fields in search of food. If they are flushed then they rush for the tall grass or bushes, and lie so well that a whole bevy may be killed one by one, if a person has a good dog. Old birds are so cunning, however, that they may not await the approach of even the steadiest setter, but fly to the thickets or woods, if any are near, on catching sight of him.

The bevies leave the high grounds in October and march or fly to the banks of streams or lakes, but they return in November, which is called the "running season," on account of their wildness, and the fact that they will not lie before a dog, but run ahead of him as fast as they can, and seek shelter in bushes and thickets where it is impossible for him to follow them. They may be found in grain-fields up to eleven o'clock in clear, frosty weather, but after that hour they resort to the banks of streams and sloughs, and lie on the sunny side of fallen logs and preen themselves. They go to the stubble again in the evening, and when they have dined they rise suddenly in the air and drop in a neighboring field, taking excellent care not to run about much, for fear of leaving a trail for their foes to follow. They generally sleep in a circle, with their heads turned outwards, so as to better guard against a surprise; and if they are not disturbed they frequent the same roosting-place for several nights in succession. Although they have many enemies, the worst is the hawk, which skims noiselessly over the grass or darts down upon them suddenly, from a high altitude. If they espy this deadly foe in the winter, when the ground is covered with snow, they dash into the fleecy shelter and soon make a hole large enough to protect themselves from all danger. The best time for quail shooting is November and December, when the frosts have wilted the corn-stalks and deprived the bushes of their thick cov-

ering of leaves. The sportsman should be early afield, for as soon as the sun appears the birds leave their roosting places and commence running about. Their scent is then easily found by a dog, especially if they are plentiful, and they generally are at that season, as they congregate in large bevies. When they are flushed they fly for the first cover, then scatter, and lie so close, in many instances, that a person may kill the majority of them, as they rise singly or in pairs. The best dogs frequently fail to detect birds which are actually under their noses. The cause of this is attributed by some persons to the power quails have of withholding their scent, while others assume that it is the result of "too much scent being scattered about," as the birds run in various directions when they alight, and thus make it impossible to locate them. Some think that the creatures are so terror-stricken on reaching cover that they press the feathers close to the body, and thus prevent their scent from escaping. Either of the latter two theories seems more plausible than the first, as it does not seem possible for a bird to have the power of voluntarily withholding the odor of its body. The only way to rout the quails, when they baffle the dogs, is to thoroughly beat the ground or bushes, as they often wait until they are almost kicked out before they take to the wing.

The Virginia quail is the only species of its genus that really affords good sport, as it is the only one which will lie any way well to a dog. It is also scattered over the greater part of the country, from Massachusetts to the Rocky Mountains, but it is far more numerous in the Western than in the Eastern States. Its abundance in the West may be inferred from the fact that it is nothing unusual for a man to bag from twenty to thirty brace in a day, with a muzzle-loader. A pot-hunter has boasted of killing two thousand in a little over five months, and a person who considered himself dexterous with the gun

was known to kill two hundred and ninety in three hundred shots. The birds are easily bagged in the open ground early in the season, as they fly straight away—if a person does not become nervous from the rapidity of their flight. Excitable people should try to give them a start of twenty or thirty yards before firing, as that distance will enable the shot to scatter, and increase the possibilities of a hit. They ought also to take deliberate aim, as snap shots are not so likely to be successful as those delivered with a prompt but steady swing. If the birds are not too wild, a charge of three drachms of powder and an ounce or an ounce and an eighth of No. 10 shot will be found sufficiently powerful to bring down the toughest old cock, going straight away at full speed, but No. 8 is better at a later period in the season, when the birds are exceedingly wild, as it has a velocity of seventy-one feet a second greater than No. 10 shot. It may also be stated that a ten-gauge gun will send its charge one hundred feet per second faster than a twelve-gauge can, so that one of the former size may be the best to use throughout the year, everything considered, if it is not too heavy. A convenient weight would be seven and a half or eight pounds.

I have bagged Bob Whites in several of the Western States, but I found them more numerous in the regions adjoining the Missouri River, and in Florida and Texas, than in any other part of the Continent. While I was travelling through Southern Nebraska, I joined a party of five, who were bound on a campaign against the birds. We secured lodging in a farm-house, which was in the center of a good game region, and remained there until we had exhausted our ammunition.

The day after our arrival we commenced work, after breakfast, along the banks of the river. The birds seemed to be quite numerous, but as they ran before the dogs, we were unable to get a shot at them. Thinking

I could do better by separating from the main party, I moved to the right, where blackberry and other bushes were quite thick, and acted as my own beater and pointer. Not being able to rouse any game by that method, I became rather listless, and walked heedlessly along, but was soon brought to an abrupt halt by the whirring of a brace of quails, which rose almost at my feet. I fired recklessly at one, but missed it, and, before I could turn round, the second had sunk into cover on the left. Knowing what my fate would be if my comrades learned of my scoring a "goose-egg," I hurriedly put another shell in the gun, and marched on as nonchalantly as possible. I was joined by one of the party a few seconds later, and he asked me if I had missed. Seeing the twinkle in his eye, I answered evasively that the gun had gone off while I was handling the trigger to see if it was all right.

"Oh, that was it, was it?" said he, with a look of disappointment.

Before he could indulge in any more exclamations, a bird sprung up out of the grass, not ten yards from him. He aimed at it wildly, fired, and missed.

"I'm in for it," said he, with the doleful air of a martyr, when he saw the fugitive disappearing over the ridge, and two of his companions rapidly approaching. When they drew near, he hung down his head, dropped mechanically into line between them, and, without a word being said on either side, they marched him to a cottonwood tree and placed his back against it. One man then pressed his hand against the culprit's chest, while the other and myself seized him by both shoulders.

"You'll kind o' handle me tenderly, won't you, boys?" said he, with an expression intended to be both bland and captivating; "'cause I aint got any other coat but this."

"Take it off, then," was the severe reply.

Off it came, as a matter of course, so that he had no covering on his shoulders but a flannel shirt.

"All together, and with a will!" said one of the party. "No mercy!"

The culprit's back was then pressed and rubbed against the tree as hard as we could do it, and though he bore the punishment with the fortitude of a martyr, I was scarcely able to breathe, with laughter, and was so weak that I fear I did not afford much assistance in punishing him. They kept at him until they must have rubbed the skin nearly off, and then let him go, after giving him a sound lecture on the misfortune he had brought upon the party by missing the first bird. He received the reprimand in silence, and, having seized his gun, resumed work as calmly as if nothing had happened. I was so delighted at having escaped the punishment I deserved that I laughed until I was weary. This seemed to arouse his suspicion, for he eyed me mistrustfully several times, and finally blurted out:

"Gol durn me if I don't think you fired at a bird and missed it. If I thought you did, I'd help to give you such a scratching that you'd think you were ten thousand Scotchmen rolled into one. I'd teach you what it is to have the feeling of being branded with a red hot iron." I pooh-poohed the idea of missing, but I did not, evidently, dispel his doubts, as he reiterated his suspicion, and also complained of a burning sensation in his back, as if the skin had been rubbed off. When we had walked about half a mile, one of the party suggested that we form into two groups and beat the ground carefully, one keeping to the leeward of the bottoms and the other to the windward. We accordingly separated, the scratched individual and myself going together. We chose the windward side, as we knew that the two pointers which formed our kennel would work up wind and drive all the birds out on our side, and therefore give us the best

chance for making a bag. The dogs were sent to beat up some bushes, and they were not there long before they flushed a bevy which flew in our direction. I was on the right, so I selected the outer bird on that side, and after grassing it, I fired at the bird next to it and brought that down also. My companion was equally successful, he having bagged both outer birds on the left. When we had picked them up he exclaimed:

"That's the way to shoot in company; you take the birds on the right, I, those on the left. If you take my advice you'll never shoot wildly into the middle of a bevy, because you are more likely to wound than to kill."

I promised to remember his advice. We then resumed our trudging, but we had not gone far ere another bevy rose before us. We again counted with both barrels, and this made my companion so enthusiastic that he shouted, "Hurrah, for our side. We're in luck, though it must hurt the feelings of quail awfully to be pelted with shot in this way. It can't be nice for them." I nodded assent, as I was too busily engaged in watching the dogs at work to enter into conversation. The animals found the birds so disinclined to flush that they became excited, and rushing into the thicket, they routed a bevy, which flew to the leeward. The remainder of the party scored on these, as the birds flew low and directly over their heads. The dogs were rated for their conduct, but this did not have much effect on them, for they again worked excitedly, owing to the habit the birds had of running before them or doubling on their tracks like hares. While we were watching this coursing match, the son of the farmer at whose house we were stopping, arrived on the scene with an old muzzle-loader, and taking aim at a bevy which were huddling on the ground near some bushes, bagged eight of them. He seemed to be highly delighted with his pot shot, but my companion was not, for he rated him roundly for firing at birds on

the ground, and told him he had better seek some other quarters for his shooting. He complied, by joining our comrades, but as they also refused to shoot in his company, he was compelled to go home. We shot up to eleven o'clock, and scored twenty brace, and knowing it would be a comparative waste of time to work during the middle of the day, we returned to the house and remained there until four o'clock. This time was not idly spent, however, for the party utilized it in discussing the habits of quails, the proper charges for guns, and the various methods of shooting. When these subjects were exhausted they related yarns about dogs, wonderful shots, and adventures in the field. Some of these were exceedingly "tall," but as they were intended to be tall, and were full of grim humor, they were greeted with hearty laughter. We sallied out again in the evening, and though the sky was somewhat murky, we managed to flush several bevies, despite their efforts to baffle the dogs and keep under cover, and made a fair score. We had shots of all kinds at them, straight away, quartering, towering, and "skew ways," as my associate expressed it, and bagged eleven brace in an hour and a half.

As it was getting too late to shoot any more, we started homeward, but we had not gone far ere the sky became so dark that we could not see ten paces. We were therefore compelled to flounder along the best way we could, and this resulted in several tumbles head foremost into bushes or tall grass. We were cheered on our way by the loud and melancholy howling of prairie wolves, whose lugubrious tones reminded me of wailing squaws at an Indian wake, but the humorist of the party explained that they were "fatherless orphans crying for their mothers." On reaching the house we found a hot dinner awaiting us. When that was finished, the incidents of the day were fully discussed, and all concluded that quail shooting over dogs was splendid sport. The

poet expressed his opinion of it in the following beautiful stanza:

> "Where can you find a nicer thing,
> Than shooting quail upon the wing;
> That's the way to pass your life,
> Free from care and worldly strife."

Comment upon this poetic effusion was interrupted by the entrance of the host with a tray of steaming glasses, filled with a generous quantity of applejack and hot water, in his hands. These received prompt attention, until it was time to retire. We were up early the next morning and at work in the field soon after sunrise. The birds laid better to the dogs than on the previous day, and the consequence was that we had much more amusement and a larger bag. We staid in that place four days, and though we bagged specimens of nearly every species of bird indigenous to the prairie at that season, our greatest haul was among the quails. We averaged about twelve brace a day, and we should have done better if we had cared to work from sunrise to sunset.

I have been out with men who killed from thirty to sixty brace of quails in a day, but such shooting soon satiated them, for it was more like work than amusement, and slaughter than sport. A manly, generous soul may feel somewhat like a hungry man at a feast, when he first gets into a good game resort, and try to get all he can, but if he has the instinct of a true sportsman his better nature soon rebels against the slaughter and forces him to give it up in disgust. If he makes only moderate bags, he is satisfied with his work and himself, and ready to take the field at any time; but if he kills for the sake of making a big score, the labor becomes disagreeable. I once spent a week on the prairie with a party of four, and though we shot every day, we always had an appetite for our work the next morning, simply because we were not

too greedy. We carried our own tent, food, and cooking utensils, so that we were entirely independent of farmers, and ready to camp wherever night overtook us. While we were shooting, one man drove the team and received the birds, and the one who first became tired took his place and allowed him to join in the sport. All were able to rest in turns by this plan, and as we drove slowly, neither dogs nor horses were fatigued, and were therefore able to resume operations the next morning in as fresh a condition as if they had not left camp. The dogs were fed each evening, no limit being placed on the quantity of their food, but they received nothing the next day until they returned to camp. Mr. Horace Smith, the veteran sportsman and writer, gave me the following recipe for feeding dogs on a shooting expedition: "Take the hearts, kidneys, livers, and gizzards of birds, and a hare or squirrel when it can be procured, and boil them into shreds. Then add corn meal until the mixture is as thick as it can be made; stir constantly, and boil thoroughly. When cooked, lay the food on a board or plate to cool, and when it is cool enough let the dogs have all they want to eat. Do not feed them the next day until they get home."

This is certainly a simple, good, and cheap way of feeding the animals, and the food is better than any dog biscuits. A deep bed of prairie grass should be prepared for them under the wagon at night, so that they may be protected from the cold and the night dew, which are liable to cripple them with rheumatism. The horses ought also to be blanketed in cool weather, and receive a liberal supply of oats, beside the prairie grass or the hay which is sometimes carried along for their use. If the animals are cared for in this manner, and not worked too hard, they will always be ready for duty, and return home in finer condition, in all probability, than when they started on the expedition.

CHAPTER X.

WILD SWANS.

Very abundant on the Pacific Coast—Classification of Linnæus—Difference between swans and ducks—Food of the swan—How to distinguish cygnets from young snow-geese—The wooing season—ow brides are won—Cygnets—Breeding grounds—Indians think the swan attains a great age—Opinions of Aristotle, Pliny, Virgil, Sonini, Ovid, and Plato on its mythical qualities—The American species—The trumpeting swan—General sketch—The whistling swan — Difference between the species—Haunts and habits — Swans-down—Swans rarely killed for their flesh—Cause of their toughness—Indians slaughter them in large numbers on the Pacific Coast—Very abundant along the Columbia River—Swans cannot rise suddenly from the water—How the sportsman should approach them—Fly low during heavy winds—The difficulty in making large bags—Prices of swans in full plumage—A day among swans—Change of quarters—Cranes and herons as sentinels—A bag of swans—Lose our boat—A welcome arrival—An Indian wild-fowler—A destructive shot—An unwelcome bath and frozen clothes—A cure for a cold—A kicking gun—Windy days the best for shooting swans—The moulting season—"Fire-hunting" swans.

These birds, which have so often aroused the poetic fire of bards, are more numerous west of the Rocky Mountains than in any other part of the world, so far as I can learn. They are, in fact, so abundant at the mouth of the Columbia River, in Oregon, which is six or seven miles wide, that the water seems, at a distance, to be covered with cumulus clouds or a snow-bank, late in the autumn. Their trumpeting and whistling sounds are familiar to those persons who have encamped on the wooded borders of a well-watered prairie in October, for they come in such vast flocks from their home in the Arctic regions, that they cover an immense tract of country in a short time, and seek every available stream and tarn in search of food and shelter. They form a most

pleasing adjunct to a landscape at any time, but when they move in dense throngs, only those who have seen them can imagine what a spirited picture they present.

Linnæus classed the swans among the duck family, notwithstanding the marked difference between them, and that, one which is apparent at a glance. The legs of the swan are, in the first place, behind the centre of equilibrium, and the bill is high and long, whereas the legs of the ducks are, proportionately, much shorter, and placed near the center of the body, and the bill is short, flat, and broad.

The position of the legs makes the swan a slow and awkward traveller on land, but in its native element it can swim as fast as an ordinary man can walk. Its food consists of frogs, leeches, small fish, grass, grain, and aquatic plants, and as they are abundant in the West, it suffers very little from hunger. In plucking the aquatic plants, the little tooth plaits of the bill enable the water to pass out, so that it does not drink any more than is necessary. It crops the grass direct from the tip of the bill, as ducks and hens do, not from the sides, like geese. Swans being monogamous, the male lives with a single female, and to win her, he, like nearly all feral creatures, is often forced to fight the most desperate battles against all rivals. These contests are waged with such fury that the combatants are sometimes placed *hors de combat* for the season, and, perhaps, fatally injured, for they use both beaks and wings, and peck and slash at each other in the most frantic manner. When the victor has driven his rival from the field, he advances boldly to the female and leads her away without any ceremony, but when he recovers from the exhaustion of the struggle he becomes very affectionate, and quietly watches her while she builds a rude nest on the ground. He is unusually tender while she is laying her eggs, and when she commences hatching he guards her closely, and with such

courage that the small predaceous animals, from fox to fisher, carefully avoid her nursery. He will not even hesitate to attack man sometimes, and as he can deliver very powerful blows with his heavy pinions, most persons do not care to encounter him, unless they are armed with a club or a gun. The cygnets, which are of a grayish color when they are three months old, are able to take care of themselves as soon as they leave the shell, and being expert swimmers, they can travel several miles, if necessary, in search of food. They remain with their parents until the approach of cold weather, and perhaps longer, as they may form a portion of the same herd when several families unite, preparatory to starting for their winter homes, late in the autumn. Cygnets, on account of their grayish hue, are often mistaken for the young of the snow-goose, yet it is an easy matter to distinguish them apart, as all geese have a strip of feathered skin between the eye and the bill, and swans have not. Swans breed throughout British America and the northern regions of the United States, being most abundant in the Hudson Bay Territory, Alaska, and portions of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. The Indians have captured cygnets too young to be able to fly, as far south as Snake River, so it is safe to infer that the birds breed as low down as the forty-ninth parallel. The red men entertain the greatest respect for swans, principally, I should judge, on account of their great longevity, for they say that a "good bird lives longer than a well-fed squaw," and is far more valuable when the latter becomes decrepit.

They have no more faith in the melodious qualities of these birds than scientists have in the music of the spheres, though they say it is pleasant to hear the sonorous resonance produced by flocks of whistling swans when they fly high over the land at night. It was to this European species of the whistling swan that the an-

cients attributed the enchanting notes which have become proverbial, but which are now known to be apocryphal. Neither Aristotle nor Pliny believed the bird possessed the power of song, but Virgil, using it figuratively, causes it to indulge in rapturous strains, for he says, in his Æneid:

> " *Cum sese ē pastu referunt, et longa canoros*
> *Dant per colla modos.*"

Further on, however, he gives a very just description of its note:

> " *Piscosove amne Podusæ,*
> *Dant sanitum rauci per stagna loquacia Cygni.*"

Sonini thought that the whistling noise produced by the wings, and which can be heard quite a distance, was the original cause for supposing that the swan had the power of song, and the reason why it was made sacred to Apollo and the Muses.

It was from this belief in the musical qualities of the bird that poets were supposed to assume its form after death. The beautiful myth, that swans foresaw their own death and sang their own elegy, is referred to by Ovid, where he says:

> " *Carmina jam moriens, canit exequialia Cygnus.*"

Plato also touches upon this charming fiction, for he, in Phœdo, attributes their melodious dirge to the same sort of prescience which enables good men to look forward with delight to the time when their mortal forms will assume immortality.

There are two species of swans on the American Continent, but, thus far, no persons have heard their enchanting strains, unless their imagination has transformed the frightful noise of the trumpeting swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), or the resonant flight of the whistling, or American, swan (*Cygnus Americanus*), into the exquisite melody so graphically described by the ancient poets.

The trumpeting swan is quite rare east of the Mississippi River, but very common beyond the Rocky Mountains, being found from British America to the Mexican border. It is pure white in color; the bill and feet are black; the tail is composed of twenty-four feathers, instead of twenty, as in the whistling swan; the bill is longer than the head; the feathers on the forehead end in a semi-elliptical, instead of a crescent-like outline; and the extremity of the nostril is only half as far forward as the commissure. This species derives its name from its peculiar voice, it being an exception to the general silence of the family—at least to specimens in a domestic state. Its notes are rough, loud, and shrill, and not unlike those produced on a trumpet or clarionet by a man who does not understand playing. These notes are often uttered when it is disturbed, annoyed, or angry, or when the mates are calling to each other.

It is not only a very fast swimmer, but it can remain long on the wing, and is so wary, where it has been pursued much, that it is a difficult matter for persons to approach it within gunshot. An adult male is between four and five feet in length, weighs from twenty to thirty-five pounds, and has a spread of wings varying from six to ten feet.

The whistling swan differs from the preceding in several points. It is, primarily, smaller and more widely distributed; the bill, which is broad and high at the base, is as long as the head; the feathers on the forehead end in a semicircular outline; and the anterior extremity of the nostrils is forward of the commissure. An adult has a length of about fifty-five inches, the wings are twenty-two inches long, and the tarsus is about four and a quarter inches, or a little more. The bill is also marked with a yellow spot on the base, so that it has distinguishing traits enough to enable persons to readily recognize it. Although it is distributed throughout the

Continent, yet its favorite haunts are the regions beyond the Rocky Mountains, where it may be seen in herds numbering from ten to a thousand. These herds are so tame that they frequently fly close enough to the land to enable persons to shoot at them, and even on the water they are rather unsuspicious, comparatively speaking, and are much more easily approached in a sneak-boat than either ducks or geese. The market hunters of the Pacific Coast shoot them for their plumage alone, as this brings a good price, swans-down being largely used for trimming the garments of fashionable ladies; it is also exported in considerable quantities by the Hudson Bay Company, as it meets a ready sale in France and Russia. Few sportsmen kill adult swans for the sake of their flesh, as it is rather dry and tough, but that of the cygnets is quite palatable, though inferior to the meat of young ducks and geese.

One cause of the toughness of the adult is, that the oil contained in the skin dries into the flesh, unless the bird is plucked immediately after being shot; but if that is done, and the carcass is hung up until it gets a little high, a hungry man would have slight cause for criticising the daintiness of roast swan. The carcass should be allowed to hang as long as possible, especially in winter, as the frost seems to take away much of the fishy taste which it has in the autumn and early winter. The greatest enemies of the swans on the Pacific Coast are the Indians, for they slaughter them at all times, and even devour the eggs, if they can find them. One savage is more destructive to these birds than a dozen white pot-hunters, for the latter have some scruples, but the former has none. Some of the littoral Indians of the Pacific kill large numbers, of all ages and sexes, in July and August, when the young broods are unable to protect themselves, and the adults are so defenceless from moulting that they can neither run nor fly. The red

men use only clubs and spears in their work of slaughter; persons may therefore imagine how easy it is to capture them. After the birds are killed, the savages commence feasting, and keep it up until they have gorged themselves. They used, formerly, to make beds, pillows, and head-dresses for themselves out of the feathers, but of late years they have become accustomed to selling them to white traders for a mere song.

The Aleutian Indians of Alaska, who are as proficient with the gun and the spear as they are with the hook and trident, kill more swans during the moulting season than any tribe on the Continent; as the birds are not only numerous, but so incapable of flight that they are knocked down with clubs on the shore, or captured on the water by chasing them in canoes. They are very abundant in autumn and winter along the Columbia River and its numerous tributaries, and it is then a pleasant sight to see them violently beating the water as they splash and scramble to the windward in their efforts to rise, or sailing gracefully over the dark-green forests, which make their whiteness more apparent by the contrast in hue.

Swans cannot rise suddenly from the water, so they have to flap along for several yards before they can get on the wing, especially in calm weather. This beating or flapping produces a crackling noise which can be heard quite a long distance off. The sportsman who is acquainted with this characteristic never approaches the birds from the leeward; the result is, that he may obtain several shots ere they gain headway enough to get out of range. Even when they see their foe approaching they do not attempt to escape immediately, but keep staring at him and wheeling round and round in the most perplexed manner, as if they were loth to leave or stupefied at the threatened danger; and should they rise, they are likely to fly towards him, if he is to the wind-

ward, and thus give him the best possible chance for knocking them over with a rifle, or with a breech-loader charged with buckshot or No. 1 shot. It is of little use to shoot at them when the breast is presented, except with a rifle, as the mass of feathers in front is sufficiently dense to turn shot unless it is fired at close range, and even then a person is not always sure of securing them.

During heavy head or side winds they fly close to the land, and this gives a person ashore an opportunity of bagging a few; but they fly high in fine weather, and when resting on the water they keep as far away from the land as they can, as all their apprehensions of danger are founded on its proximity. I have sometimes tried to steal upon them from the bullrushes or shrubbery growing along the shore, but I was generally unsuccessful, for the moment my form appeared they swam rapidly away or took to flight. They are certainly keen of vision, and seem to know by intuition that man is their greatest enemy, for they will flee from him at once, whereas a bear, a wolf, or a fox, causes them no annoyance, and may romp about in their sight without causing any action on their part except a stare of curiosity. The difficulty of making a good bag of swans can easily be appreciated by those who have tried it in regions where they are hunted much; hence, a man who brings down his two or three brace in a day feels rather proud of his achievement. This difficulty is all the greater from the fact that they do not, so far as my experience goes, answer to calls, either on the wing or the water, so that a person has no resource left except to shoot them as they pass his place of concealment, or to steal upon them while they are paddling about in some narrow stream or tarn, and tumble them over before they can rise for flight. A man who is fonder of watching their actions than of making a large bag, would prefer creeping upon them in the water to bringing them down on the land,

for then he may note with pleasure their graceful movements and stately mien as, with oary feet, they proudly row themselves over the mirror-like water or the soughing wavelets of bluish hue. Their attitudes are always majestic on the water, for their high, arched necks give them an air of mingled grace and stateliness; yet their beauty is wasted on the pot hunter, as he looks upon them merely from a monetary point of view, and does not hesitate to kill the female while she is hatching, for the sake of the dollar she may bring in the market. A swan in full plumage sometimes sells as high as a dollar and a half, but this price is paid only when there is a good demand for the down, or the bird is plump and tender. Swans are so common along the Columbia River that I doubt if one would there bring more that fifty or seventy-five cents, and only limited numbers can realize that sum.

If a man wants swan shooting to his heart's content, he has only to visit any of the States and Territories from Alaska to California, and from Montana to Arizona, and if he does not succeed in that region he cannot in any part of the world. I have shot a swan from the deck of a steamer on the Snake River, and many from canoes on the Upper Columbia and Missouri Rivers, and found that it required no great exertion to bag them, provided I fired at the head and neck with a shot gun, and at the body with a rifle.

The best bag I ever made was on a sand bar, or island, in the Upper Columbia. This was occupied largely by swans, although geese and ducks were also quite common, and so numerous in the surrounding waters that the stream was literally covered with them. I went to this place with a rancher, who was a keen sportsman, and a man whose ideal of life was a lod e in the wilderness where he could commune with nature and hunt and fish whenever the spirit seized him. We took up our position on the island

at the romantic hour of half past four o'clock on a cold November morning, and waited anxiously for daylight, as we could hear the occasional creeaunk of some sturdy gander, or the trumpet blast of a swan—sounds which caused our blood to tingle and our hands to involuntarily grasp the guns. After waiting an hour or more without getting a shot we commenced running up and down in order to warm our blood, and imprecating the natatores that would not oblige us by coming near enough to be killed. While we were anxiously waiting for the birds to approach us, we heard the shrill whistle of a steamer, which was loudly echoed by the woods and mountains, and on turning round we saw the white form of the craft some distance down the river. We were anything but pleased at its appearance, as we thought it would send the birds bedded on the river inland, but, instead of that, its scream caused them to rise *en masse*, and to come towards us with a rush that augured well for sport. On they came towards the island with as much confidence as if they had no foe on earth. The swans being arranged in a queue, I aimed at the head of the first when it was about twenty yards away, and brought it down with a heavy charge of No. 1 shot, and before the others could turn about, I bagged the second, and scared the remainder so badly that they began to blow their trumpets as they hastened away. I picked up the dead birds with the aid of a boat, and having placed them at the foot of a miniature cotton-wood tree, I gave my companion a look of mingled triumph and contempt that would have withered another man, but he seemed to be indifferent to it, and merely said:—

"Sho; I wouldn't have fired at the swans with a shotgun at that distance. Now, if you had hit them in the eye with a rifle, you might call it passable shooting."

"How could I see their eyes at that distance?"

"I could; I saw one wink back at the other when you

lifted your gun, as much as to say, 'here's a joke; he's going to fire at us.'"

"They didn't find it a joke, though. Why didn't you fire at them."

"Well, the fact is my gun was not loaded."

"I'm going to make up for it, however, the next time, so you needn't make a fuss about it. I suppose you will put it in the papers one of these days."

"It is very likely, unless you do better. But now we must stop our nonsense, for the first principle in shooting wild fowl is, 'No talking in the blind.'"

"All right; I'm as silent as a love-lorn oyster. Come on, ducks and geese, and beauteous swans."

They did not come on as rapidly as they ought, however, and we waited at least twenty minutes before a large number of ducks came near enough to enable us to use our guns; but we made up for lost time on them, for we brought down three, and filled the air with small clouds of feathers. As we had no dog with us, we had to do our own retrieving. This was rather cold work, for the water was exceedingly chilly; so chilly, in fact, that we found it a difficult matter to handle our weapons when we desired to finish the cripples. Having secured the dead birds, we seated ourselves on a fallen log, while waiting to welcome the feathered creatures to hospitable graves, and devoted our time to discussing the effect of the presence of the steamer on our day's sport, but before we could come to any decision about the matter, she rounded a turn in the river, and gave vent to such a piercing scream that she aroused thousands of the natatores and sent them scurrying towards us. Seeing that the swans were mingled up with the geese and ducks, we reserved our fire until the former just passed us, and then opened on the cygnets, which occupied the rear, and bagged two of them. Having gathered our trophies, we took to our boat, and, paddling round the

lower part of the island, entered a cove which was sheltered on one side by high terraces, and on the other by a small coppice of deciduous trees. When we had proceeded about half a mile up this ribbon of water, we saw immense flocks of ducks bedded in the middle, and beyond them, near the copse, swans, snow and Canada geese, and other species, while cranes and herons lined the shore, and made the woods resound with their booming whoops. When the latter descried us, they croaked an alarm and fled precipitately. They were followed in regular order by the geese, ducks, and shore birds, the swans being the last to show any signs of fear. I have always noticed that the grallatores are among the most vigilant and cautious of the feathered creation. They seem to occupy the same position to the swimming and wading birds that blue-jays do to grouse and other denizens of the woodland, and the kill-deer plover to bay-birds, for these feathered detectives are the keenest and readiest of sentinels in descrying and loudly announcing the presence of an enemy. As soon as the cranes and herons announced our presence we paddled rapidly towards the swans. Knowing that they would be the last to rise, we succeeded in reaching their grounds in less than five minutes, but the moment they saw us they commenced wheeling and staring and glancing perplexedly, sideways, as if they did not know what was best to do. Our rapid approach soon decided their course, for they raised themselves partially out of the water and came flapping and splashing towards us, as they could not take wing without coming in our direction. Before they could obtain momentum enough to rise, we blazed away at them and killed three and wounded two more so severely that they could not escape. Thinking we had done remarkably well so far, we went ashore, and anchored our boat by means of a large stone, which was tied to the painter,

while we prepared a cygnet for dinner. When that was cooked, an operation which took an hour, as we had to bury it in the ashes, we set to work on it with a will and soon finished it, for the raw air had given us a keen appetite. Having satisfied the cravings of nature, we went towards the boat, but on reaching the spot where it had been anchored we were thunderstruck to find it gone. We supposed, at first, that some prowlers had stolen it, but on glancing at the creek we saw it drifting slowly downwards, at least half a mile away. This was a predicament we had not anticipated, and we were at our wit's ends to know how to escape from it. The only feasible plan that presented itself was to swim after the craft; but that was more easily thought of than done, as the water was too cold to be borne for any length of time. While we were helplessly debating our situation, and considering the possibility of remaining on the island until some passing steamer took us off, we saw a small shovel-nose canoe, containing a solitary Indian, running down the cove. When he came abreast of us we hailed him in such stentorian tones that their echo may be hanging around there yet. He responded, and on coming near the shore we told him we would pay him well if he would recover the runaway boat. He said he would do it for half a dollar. The offer was accepted, and when he brought the craft back he was cheerfully paid. When the "Son of the Forest" landed to warm his hands at our fire, we learned from him that he had been shooting ducks on the upper arm of the cove, and that they were so abundant that he was able to kill nineteen brace in less than three hours with an old Hudson Bay musket, that had a muzzle as large as a blunderbuss. When I saw it I came to the conclusion that it could outkick an army mule, and subsequent events proved that I was not far wrong. As the noble red man had nothing to do for the remainder of the day, we con-

cluded to hire him as an assistant, and the sum of one dollar being offered for his services, he accepted it in the promptest manner. We then paddled up stream until we arrived in sight of the flocks of wild fowl which were riding the wavelets under the shelter of a huge crag, and chattering pleasantly to one another. Seeing that the chances of bagging them on the land were better than on the water, my companion decided to bear down on them from the leeward in a canoe, while the Indian and myself were to conceal ourselves in the bushes on shore, and shoot them as they flew past us to the windward.

Being anxious to secure all the swans I could, I asked the Indian to load his musket heavily with buckshot, so as to be able to make long shots, and he promised to comply, if I would pay for the ammunition. I readily assented to this proposition. Having taken our position in a thicket close to the water, we were not there long before the swans were sprung, and as the wind was blowing heavily, they flew very low and partially sideways, and when they came within range of our guns, we blazed away at them. The red man was the first to open fire, but the thundering report of his gun had hardly startled the echoing hills before his scream accompanied it. On looking at the birds he shot at, I saw pieces of legs, feathers, and flesh flying about in the air. One glance at these proved to me that he had been extraordinarily liberal in the use of powder and shot, and had paid dearly for it. I forgot all about his condition for a moment, as I was too much absorbed in my work to have much consideration for anybody or anything just then, and when the swans came within ten or fifteen yards of me, I banged away at their heads, and succeeded in killing one, and wounding another so severely that it fell into the water, not forty feet from the shore.

Being under the impression that it was only winged, and wishing to secure it alive, if possible, I made a rush

for it, but before I could reach it I tumbled headlong into the water. I arose in a hurry, puffing and blowing, and as my garments were all wet, I became somewhat desperate, and dashing further out, I seized the bird by the neck and dragged it ashore, though not without receiving several severe blows from its uninjured wing.

Shivering as I was, I could not help laughing at the Indian, who was making very wry faces, and rubbing his shoulder vigorously. To my query of what ailed him, he responded with a disgusted *wach*, and said: "Him kick heap dam;" and taking the offending weapon in his hand he dashed it to the ground, with an emphatic imprecation that sounded very much like swearing.

When my pale-faced companion arrived on the scene he decided that we should hasten homeward immediately, for fear I might catch a cold from my drenching, and as the proposition was agreeable, I acceded to it. Having placed our trophies in the boat, we jumped in, and were joined by the red man, as his arm was too sore to enable him to paddle his own canoe. Tying his craft behind ours, we hoisted sail, and in the course of half an hour reached my friend's ranch, but when I attempted to walk to the house I found it a matter of difficulty, as my clothes had frozen stiff.

As soon as I entered, I threw off my garments, bathed the body with cold water, and after a vigorous application of a rough towel, wrapped myself in a heavy blanket and retired to bed. I then took a generous quantity of punch, after which I closed my eyes, and slept soundly until daylight. When I awoke I felt as comfortable, both mentally and physically, as if I had met with no mishap. The Indian had departed before I arose, so that I could not tell how much he was injured, but, judging from what the host told me, he must have paid dearly for his desire to acquit himself creditably. His arm was, it seems, very much swollen and discolored,

for, according to the humorous statement of the narrator, the musket had kicked so hard that it drove him two or three feet into the ground and knocked the moccasins off his feet. He intimated that he would not hire savages again when out shooting swans, as they did more harm than good, by blowing the birds to pieces and destroying a lot of beautiful feathers. We had cygnets for dinner that day, and though the flesh was somewhat dry, yet it was rather palatable; but it took four day's seasoning in the frost to make the adults fit for the table, and then they were not very dainty.

According to my host, who was an experienced wild-fowler, the best days for shooting swans are those which are windy, as the birds are then extremely loth to take wing, and if they do rise, they fly so low and close to the land that they may be shot from covert or a sneak-box screened with boughs or reeds. They can be bagged in narrow streams by sculling rapidly down on them from the windward, as it takes them a comparatively long time to rise from the water; hence, one may sometimes touch them with a gun before they can get away. They do not afford much sport before September or October, as they moult in July and August, and look so wretchedly poor that few sportsmen would care to shoot them. The surest way of making a large bag of swans is to "fire-hunt" them—that is, to use torches in their haunts at night, for as soon as they see the glare they become stupefied, and wait until the hunters knock them over with clubs or guns. This is a favorite method of killing them with Indians, pot-hunters, and some men who would be angry if they were classed with either of these. I knew two white men to kill eighteen in one night, and a party of five Indians to bag forty-one between dusk and midnight. I was spearing flatfish from a canoe by torch-light, in an arm of Puget Sound, one night, when two swans came swimming towards me from the mouth of a

river. I hurled the spear at the first one that came near, and putting it through its back, captured it without much difficulty, while two young Indians, who accompanied me, killed the other with a salmon club—that is a club used for knocking salmon on the head.

CHAPTER XI.

WILD GEESE.

Wild geese—Abundant in the West—Very destructive to winter crops—Large numbers poisoned annually—How geese are poisoned in China—Number of species of geese in the United States and Canada—The system of goose shooting practised in the West—A retrieving mule—Earnings of market hunters—Blinds—Wounded decoys—The proper color of the clothes—Ice blinds—Men on horseback—Haunts of geese—Fire-hunting—Large numbers shot—The "goose season"—Migrations—Seldom alight in woods—Fly low in windy, rainy, and murky weather—Sailing to geese—Punt-guns tabooed by gentlemen—Sneak-boats, sneak-boxes and decoys—General sketches of the white-fronted or laughing goose, the snow goose, the horned wavy, the emperor, or painted goose, the blue goose, or bald-headed brant, the black brant and its varieties, and the Canada goose and its varieties—How to distinguish geese from swans and ducks—A suggestion for pursuing wild animals—A thousand geese killed in a week—Drunken geese and pot-hunters—Stalking geese under cover of a horse—Geese and guns—Professional wild-fowlers and their "rigs"—Sink-boxes—Staking out decoys—Value of a good "caller"—Bringing down wild birds—A swimmer and his duties—A day in a sneak-box—A ducking in a lake—The shady side of sport.

Wild geese are more abundant in the West in autumn, and the South-west in winter, than in any other portion of the Continent, for they move in such vast flocks that they might be appropriately compared to a snow storm. Their presence is not an unmixed blessing, however, especially to farmers, as they often destroy large crops of winter cereals, and are so destructive in other ways that a relentless war is waged against them, every means of destruction, from shooting to poisoning, being employed to lessen their numbers. They have been known to eat up a third of the winter wheat in some of the regions adjoining the Missouri River; and in California they

scarcely leave a blade of grain growing in quite a large district. It is estimated that they devoured crops valued at two hundred thousand dollars in one county of California in 1878, and that their depredations in other sections were equally as great; it is therefore evident that they are not such welcome visitors as they would be if they had smaller appetites. A strong peculiarity about some of the geese is the manner in which they alight to feed, for each species keeps by itself, although the varieties of the same species may be mingled indiscriminately together, and gabbling contentedly while they are engaged in impoverishing the grangers. Shooting produces such little effect on their numbers that many farmers have almost given it up in despair, and depend on grain soaked in strychnine for accomplishing their purpose; but this method has its drawbacks, for the geese that do not succumb at once to the poison may fly away and be shot by men who do not know what they have been feeding on, and, as a result, persons who eat their flesh are frequently poisoned. They poison wild geese with *Colchicus indicus* in China, but this, it seems, is not baneful to human beings, as one rarely hears of any fatal accidents, although the birds are freely eaten by the poor people, while the use of strychnine is often attended by the direst results in parts of the West. There are about a dozen species of wild geese in the United States, by including the *Dendrocygna* found in the extreme Southwest, and which seem to be the connecting link between the *Anserinæ* and *Anatinæ*. These inhabit trees, and have qualities which make them akin to both families, but as they are only found in limited numbers, and are partial to tropicial climates, I have not deemed it necessary to describe them specifically.

The system of wild-fowl shooting practised in the West varies very much, and is either elaborate or very simple. If a person could only believe some waggish old farmers,

they merely walk beside a trained horse, mule, or ox, and shoot away at the birds until they have killed all they want, and then send the animal to retrieve them. If a western wag is to be relied on, he had a mule that was so expert in this sort of work that it would flush the geese when told to do so, and bring them ashore if they fell into a river or a lake. He offered to show me this wonderful creature, but as I had some doubts about its cleverness I did not care to see it, for I had had a brief experience of his fondness for jokes.

The easiest method for shooting geese on the plains is to approach them gradually under cover of a horse or an ox, and open fire on them with a huge weapon, known locally, as a "scatter cannon," until they seek safer quarters. Market hunters have been known to earn as much as a hundred dollars a day by this system of wild-fowling and sometimes more, as the birds are valued at from fifty cents to a dollar each, and from ten to forty are bagged at every discharge of the western piece of ordnance. I have seen flocks which were so indifferent to the noise of firing that they would merely rise or "climb," as the professional hunters have it, a few feet in the air, and, after honking their alarm and their sense of annoyance at being disturbed, return to the ground again, and remain there until the shooting made them take to the wing once more. Some persons manage to secure large bags by digging holes in the stubble-fields and covering them with straw, and then blazing away at the geese when they come to feed. These men tie the birds which they have wounded to stakes driven in the ground, and use them as decoys to lure their congeners to destruction, for they are exceedingly clamorous callers. Dead geese, if properly grouped, are also useful decoys, but their attitudes should be as natural as possible, or they may do more harm than good.

If the ground is covered with snow, the wild-fowler

WILD GEESE.

either screens his "gopher hole" with a white sheet, makes a blind of the same material, and lies in ambush behind it, or else dons it as a garment and fastens a handkerchief around his hat, and then throws himself flat on the earth, until the unsuspicious birds come near enough to be shot. A person whose dress does not harmonize with the landscape in hue, rarely gets an opportunity of bagging them, unless he is concealed in a blind made of straw, in a thicket, or in a sink-box, for the goose, notwithstanding its supposed doltish intellect, is one of the most vigilant creatures that traverse the air, and is almost sure to notice any unusual color on the ground, and to give it a wide berth. This is why experienced hunters wear white clothing in winter, and drab or buff at other times of the year. Large numbers of geese are killed near air holes in the early part of winter, by making blinds of ice blocks, but this system is so much like pot-hunting that few sportsmen care for it. Where the birds are not molested much, they become so tame that a man may ride to within shooting distance and bang away at them, for they seem to consider that a person on horseback or in a wagon is much less dangerous than one afoot.

Geese are generally found feeding on the plains and stubble-fields during the day, especially in wet or murky weather, but they return to the sand bars of rivers or the sea-shore, and the margins of ponds and lakes, in the evening. Many are slaughtered on their roosting grounds on moonlit nights, as they will often stand a good deal of shooting before they decide upon leaving for safer quarters. This is particularly the case if food is scarce, if they have been shot at much in the fields, or if the weather is cold and boisterous. "Fire-hunting" them is a favorite method with some persons, who prefer large bags to sport. These men build fires on the roosting grounds of the birds on dark nights, using the driest

wood they can find, in order to produce as much glare as possible. When the geese see this, they rise in the air in vast clouds and honk their alarm, but, instead of fleeing, they hover over the treacherous beacons until many of them are brought down by the concealed fowlers, or the noise of the prolonged shooting scares them away. I heard of a man in Dakota who filled his wagon with birds in two hours by this method; and of another, in Minnesota, who killed three thousand in ten days; but such work is slaughter, not sport, and I refer to it simply to show how numerous the geese are in some portions of the country. Killing the birds in this manner is heavy labor, and often the cause of disease, as the men are liable to catch severe colds, or be seized with an attack of rheumatism that may cling to them for life. Sink-box shooting is also most disagreeable work, as the weather is often severe enough to almost freeze the wild-fowlers into inanimate statues, and they dare not lift hand or foot for fear of scaring the birds away. The result is, that they are sometimes so benumbed that they cannot handle their weapons, and so stiff from lying in a cramped position on a very hard bed, that they can hardly move for some time after emerging from their coffin.

Wild geese are exceedingly abundant along the Missouri River from October to December, but about the first or the middle of the latter month they begin to seek a more genial climate. Their honking may then be heard at all hours of the day and night, as they move southward in heavy V and W-shaped lines. They are, as a rule, in their winter quarters by Christmas, and from that time until the following spring the bays, lakes, and rivers of Florida, Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and the contiguous regions, fairly teem with them. They seldom alight in woods when they rest during their migrations, unless they are very weary or have lost their way in the fog; but when they do, they produce a tremendous up-

roar, as if they were encouraging one another or holding an animated debate on their future course of action. When they seem to have agreed on a certain point, the crecaunk of some sturdy gander may then be heard above the gabbling din of the others, as if he were giving a peremptory decision on the subject. They fly rather low in windy, rainy, and murky weather. That is the time for sportsmen to make big bags in flight shooting, especially if they have a good place of concealment. The shot most generally used is No. 1, though B and BB are very popular with some of the most experienced wild-fowlers on the Continent, but others think that nothing will compare with a rifle, especially in fine weather, when the birds keep high in the air, or where they have been shot at so much that they carefully avoid the vicinity of fences and thickets, and even look with suspicion upon a bundle of straw in the stubble. Some persons dwelling along the sea-shore sail to geese in a small yacht or a large boat, and use punt-guns for destroying them. Their first effort is to get to the windward of a gaggle, in order to have the wind and sea in their favor for shooting, and to be able to obtain wing shots when the birds rise from the water. The best bags are generally made before and after a storm, but, if the waves are not too heavy, large numbers may also be killed during the prevalence of a stiff gale, as the birds seem to be in a bewildered condition at that time, and allow the boat to come quite close before they attempt to fly away. A punt-gun is not considered a legitimate weapon among gentlemen, so it is relegated to the craft of the market-hunter. Many men who look with a species of mild horror on punting, do not hesitate to kill geese and ducks from sneak-boats, and so far did they carry this system of destruction that some of the Western States have had to pass a law prohibiting the killing of wild-fowl by means of any floating device, whether it be a

sail-boat, a steam-cutter, a sneak-box, or a sneak-boat. The sneak-boat used in Western streams and lakes is a narrow, canoe-shaped craft, which has a length of from ten to fourteen feet, and is so light in draught that it would almost float in a basin of water. The wild-fowler lies on his back in this, and by sculling over his left shoulder with his right hand, and with a short oar which is run through a hole in the stern, he is able to bear down on the feeding gaggles, as the boat seems to them to be nothing more dangerous than a floating log. They soon learn their mistake, however, for the man reserves his fire until he is in their midst, and then opens upon them with two heavily-loaded guns, which may bring from ten to thirty out of every gaggle or skein, and as these are worth from six to twelve dollars per dozen, wholesale, it is easy to see that the business of killing them is a paying one. Some persons who try to steal upon the birds in a boat in open water, cover the bow and sides of their craft with reeds or bushes to give them as innocent an appearance as possible, and are thus enabled to scull upon a gaggle before their character is detected. They are more successful at night and in the evening or morning, than at any other time, as the birds are then easily approached; and by moving from gloom to light, the roosts can be seen long before the inmates have any idea of the danger that threatens them. Shooting them over live decoys from a sneak-box or a blind is considered legitimate sport, as it gives them a chance for their lives. The sneak-box is simply a rude wooden coffin or float, about six feet in length, in which the wild-fowler lies while awaiting the arrival of the birds. It is buried in the ground until it is even with the surface, generally near some spot which the geese frequent or pass over in their morning and evening flights, and where they are sure to see and hear the tame decoys employed to lure them to death. These decoys are con-

nected with the sneak-box by cords, and are usually placed in pairs on each side of it, as they call much better when they are together than when they are isolated, owing to their habit of cackling socially to one another.

Of the different species of geese found on the Continent, one of the best known and most sought is the white-fronted, or laughing goose (*Anser albifrons*, var. *gambelli*), which has reddish legs and bill; alongside of bill and forehead the color is white, margined behind with blackish-brown; the remainder of the head and neck is grayish-brown, but paler on the jugulum. The back is bluish-gray; the feathers are tipped anteriorly with brown; the bill and breast are grayish-white, blotched with black; the anal region, flanks, under part of the tail and upper coverts are white; and the greater coverts are edged with white. The tail is brownish and has sixteen feathers; and the axillars and under surface of the wings are ashy plumbeous. This species is exceedingly numerous during the autumn and spring, and may be found all winter in some of the regions bordering the North Pacific Ocean, but the majority go as far South as Southern California, Mexico, and the adjoining Territories. They return to the North in the spring to build their nests and rear their young, their favorite habitat being the vast area extending from the forty-ninth to the seventieth parallel. Indians say that the females lay from six to a dozen eggs each, in a rude nest, which is nothing more than a depression in the ground, and that the goslings take to the water almost immediately after leaving the shell, and keep near it until they commence their southern migration, but thousands, if not millions of them, never reach their winter home, as they are slaughtered indiscriminately by red and white fowlers as soon as they are in a fit condition for the table. They move in such immense masses that they resemble huge clouds; and when they alight they seem to be most at-

tached to grassy patches near streams, and tidewater marshes, as they may be found in such places when they are scarce on the plains.

The snow goose, or white-brant (*Anser hyperboreus*), covers the West in such vast flocks that millions may be found there during the autumn and spring. They are not welcome, however, as they are very destructive to crops, and eat up everything in the form of a cereal they can find. The result is, that farmers wage war on them with batteries, shot guns, and strychnine, and decimate them by the thousands. Market hunters, pot-hunters, and punters also prey upon them night and day, and slaughter them by every device known to man; yet their numbers do not apparently diminish in the West, for they arrive in hordes as regularly as the migratory season comes round. This species may be readily distinguished from its congeners by its pure-white color; its red legs and bill, and silvery-bluish primary quills. It is readily susceptible to domestication, as several instances are known in which it alighted to the barn-yard geese, and remained with them, notwithstanding the numerous calls it had from its wild congeners to rejoin them. A man may ride up to a flock of these geese in regions where they have not been pursued much, and shoot them down, or even knock them over with a stout stick. It is no uncommon thing to bag from forty to seventy in a day by stalking them behind docile oxen or horses; and the number that can be killed on the sand bars at night can only be estimated.

The horned wavy (*A. rossii*), which is a miniature copy of the preceding species, is very common in parts of British America, and is slaughtered in large numbers on the streams and tarns scattered throughout the Saskatchawan region. It is not much larger than a canvas-back duck, as it has only a length of twenty-four inches, but what it lacks in size it atones for in quality of flesh.

Another handsome member of the *Anserinæ* is the emperor, or painted goose (*Philæte canagica*), which is mainly confined to the northwest coast of the Pacific Ocean, being most abundant in Alaska and the northern parts of British Columbia. The head, back of the neck, and tail of this species are white; the throat is black, speckled with white; the quills are black and white; the remainder of the body is bluish-gray, varied with pale lilac spots, and marked in parts with crescent-like spots of black.

The blue goose, or bald-headed brant (*A. cærulescens*), has an ashy-gray hue, varied with dark-brown; but the under parts, tail coverts, head, and the superior portion of the neck are white. This species is common in the Rocky Mountain region, but scarce east of it, so that it is a true denizen of the Far West. It associates freely with the snow goose and others, and accompanies them on their migrations.

The brants are exceedingly numerous throughout nearly all parts of Canada and the United States, but they are most abundant in the region beyond the Missouri River. They can be readily distinguished from the preceding genera by their black bills and legs, and black heads and necks, with white spaces. They are the most maritime members of the *Anserinæ*, and also the most exclusive, for they seldom associate with other wild fowl. They are popularly supposed to live on fish, but this is evidently a fallacy, as their excrementary deposits prove that they subsist mainly on vegetable matter, though some of them may occasionally eat the sandworm. Another proof that they are vegetarians is, they do not dive for their food, and that they are fond of frequenting brackish marshes where eel-grass and other aquatic vegetation grows. The birds kept as decoys by wild-fowlers live on corn, drink fresh water, and manifest no desire for fish; so if we were to judge from this evidence,

it would be safe to say that they are not fish-eaters even to a small extent.

Brants go very far north to raise their young, probably as far as the climate or land will permit them, for they were seen flying toward the Pole by all explorers who went in search of that locality. Those that are barren do not crave for the Arctic regions so much as those that are fertile, they being content to spend their summer between the parallels of sixty degrees and seventy-two degrees, whereas some of their kindred go ten or twelve degrees further at least, judging from reports of Arctic navigators. When migrating, they often move in large skeins, but not in such vast numbers as other species of the family, if I except the Canadian goose and its varieties. Some old wild-fowlers say that the black brant (*Branta bernicla*), when it starts on a journey during a gale, fills its crop with sand, or ballast, as they call it, and then darts away at a high rate of speed. This species may be readily identified in the air, as it does not assume the V-shape when flying in flocks, or skeins, and its voice is quite thin, though musical. Its flesh is highly edible, and has little, if any, of the flavor which it would have were it nurtured on marine animals of any kind. The black brant, which is confined almost exclusively to the Atlantic Coast, being rarely found west of the Rocky Mountains, is about two feet in length, and the head, neck, anterior portion of the body, and tail and quills are black. The upper tail coverts, the streaks on the sides of the neck, and the upper eyelids are white; the back and under parts are brownish-gray, except the posterior portion of the body and the under tail coverts. This species is supplanted on the Pacific Coast by the variety *nigricans*, which is the most duck-like of all the *Anserinæ* in that section of country. Its head and neck are a deep-black, the remainder of the body, except the rump, being a sooty plumbeous. The throat has a white

patch in the center and on the sides, and the collar on the nape is interrupted behind by an isthmus of black.

This species is so much attached to the sea-coast that it rarely resorts to inland streams or tarns, its favorite habitat being the salt marshes and tidewater lands where it can find eel-grass and kindred vegetation. It travels in small strings when migrating, and generally keeps along the coast, so as to be ready to drop to the land when it is fatigued or it desires to seek shelter from a fierce storm of wind. I have found it over two hundred miles from salt water, however, and from this I should infer that it will feed and thrive on the aquatic plants that grow in lakes and rivers. I have also seen it mingled with gulls, ducks, and other birds occasionally; it can, therefore, change its habits, if forced to do so by circumstances, for it is naturally so unsociable as to avoid all contact with others of the feathered creation. I have heard cattle-ranchers say that it breeds as far south as the California line, and that its nests may be found in the Klamath Basin, in Oregon, which has an altitude of nearly five thousand feet above the level of the sea. This seems probable, as the climate of that region, owing to its elevation, is very cool in summer, and the surrounding country abounds with lakes, which produce many species of water-plants in profusion. Nearly every species of aquatic or wading bird on the North Pacific Coast may be seen in that wild retreat during the breeding season, for the marshes are so thronged with nests that it is almost impossible for a person to pass through them without treading on eggs or young birds.

The Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) is the most widely distributed species of its family, being found in every part of Canada and the United States, except the extreme southern regions of the latter country. It is also one of the largest and handsomest members of its race, and is not excelled by any of its wild congeners in

delicacy of flesh. Its legs, head, neck, and bill, are black, a large triangular patch of white decorates the cheeks behind the eyes, and there are a few whitish feathers on the eyelids. The upper region is grayish-brown, with paler edges; the anterior is lightish, with a tinge of purplish-gray; the tail feathers, which number eighteen, are black, and the upper tail coverts white. It has a length of about three feet and a half; the wing is eighteen inches, and the tarsus nearly four inches long. It breeds in almost all sections of the country north of the thirty-third parallel, but its favorite nesting haunts seem to be the untrodden regions of the far north, as it is exceedingly common in Labrador, Newfoundland, and portions of Canada proper, British Columbia, Alaska, and the States and Territories of the Pacific Slope. It is found as far south as Texas in winter, and has been shot near the Mexican border in California. I have seen several small flocks of this species parading their goslings along the margins of lakes and streams in Idaho, Montana, and contiguous Territories, or swimming with them in the water when it was smooth. If they were pursued on such occasions, they fled, and left the young to take care of themselves, and this the piping creatures attempted to do, by diving or by fluttering along the surface at a rate of speed one would not give them credit for. The goslings are half grown by the middle of June, and as they are then highly edible, large numbers are killed by whites and Indians. The adults share their fate to a certain extent, for, owing to their moulting, they cannot fly, and are therefore easily knocked over with a club, an arrow, or a shot-gun.

Thousands are shot every day from September to March by the whites, and hundreds of thousands meet their death at the hands of the Indians during the summer months, when they are moulting. Yet they do not seem to decrease in numbers in the Far West, and are as destructive as ever to crops in some portions of the coun-

try. The Canada goose, like the other species, has been ignored as a farm-yard pet, notwithstanding its fine form and the fact that it can be readily domesticated, and will breed in confinement, or pair with its barn-yard congeners. The cross obtained by this admixture is considered to be superior to either of its progenitors, as it has the plumpness and delicacy of the tame species, the flavor of the wild, and is hardier than either. The young of the Canada goose do not, it is said, lay any eggs in a state of domestication until they are three years old, and then they lay four or five; but after that time the number increases gradually until it reaches the limit allowed by nature. There are two varieties of this brant, which differ from the typical species in a few minor details. The Hutchins variety is almost a perfect copy of the Canada goose, except that it is smaller, being only about thirty inches in length, and that its tail is composed of sixteen feathers. The other variety—*B. canadensis* var. *leucopareia*—differs only in having the black hue of the neck banded below by a white collar, and having the under parts darker, so that it is well defined against the white of the tail coverts and the lower portion of the neck. The geese described include eight species and four varieties. These may be readily distinguished from the swans by the strip of feathered skin between their eyes and bills, and from the ducks by their tarsi, which are entirely reticulate.

It is such an easy matter to make a big bag of geese in the West during the autumn, and in the Southwest in winter, that the veriest tyro may become a great wild-fowler in a short time, if a large bag is to be the criterion of his skill; but where they are scarce and hunted much, it requires all the patience, caution, cunning, and devices of the most experienced sportsman to steal upon them unawares, or to decoy them within range of a gun. They learn to avoid blinds, "gopher-

holes," sneak-boats, and sneak-boxes in a short time, and to know by intuition where danger lies. The most successful method of shooting them upon streams or lakes is to scull upon them down wind, as they must rise to the windward, and this may bring them within gun range before they can get on the wing. If I were to give a maxim for pursuing wild animals, I should say: Hunt quadrupeds up wind, and wild fowl down wind; keep out of sight as much as possible, and preserve the strictest silence. Study the haunts and habits of all creatures you desire to capture; be patient and persevering, rather than impetuous and eager; and do not destroy anything out of mere wantonness of spirit.

The abundance of geese in the West and Southwest may be inferred from the fact that a man has been known to kill a thousand in a week with a muzzle-loading gun, and that another had to use a cart to take what he shot in two days to market. This was in Minnesota. A mean way of destroying them is practised in some portions of the Northwest. This is to soak corn in whiskey and scatter it in fields which they frequent. When they eat this they become helplessly intoxicated, and the men then go among them and knock them on the head with clubs. They often load cart after cart with them by this method, and send them to market, where they meet with a ready sale. I have known men to kill two hundred geese in a day with a muzzle-loader, by stalking them in a field under cover of a well-trained horse. These men did not bear directly down on the birds, but approached them obliquely, and very slowly, in order to lead them to suppose that no harm was intended, and when they got within shooting range they opened fire with huge weapons loaded with BB shot, and frequently bagged from ten to thirty in one round. After the volley, the survivors rose in the air for a few moments and screamed their sense of annoyance at being disturbed, but after hover-

ing for a few moments they settled down again, if the enemy kept himself well concealed, and commenced feeding. If they descried him, however, they fled in the most precipitate manner, and did not stop until they placed many a mile between him and themselves. They also became suspicious of horses after that, and looked upon them as foes in disguise. It is wonderful what little attention a flock of wild geese sometimes pay to a man without a gun, but let him have one, and the moment the sentinel gander espies him he sounds an alarm immediately, and all seek safety in flight, after honking their displeasure at his presence. The adage, "Silly as a goose," can have no reference to the wild species, for if there is a cautious, vigilant, keen-eyed, sharp-hearing bird, it is a wild goose. Awkward and doltish as it may look when waddling around on land, few of its order can compare with it in gracefulness as, with expanded wings, it sails in the air, or floats tranquilly on the body of some placid lake or glistening river.

The most exciting system of shooting geese practised along the sea-coast is to sail down upon them when they are bedded on the water, or to pepper them from sink-boxes, which are buried to their edges on some point or bar which they cross when flying from one spot to another, or which they visit to preen themselves after their bath and dinner. Where the geese are numerous, some men make a living by shooting them for the market or by letting boats and decoys to sportsmen who wish to have a day's wild-fowling. These men are generally ardent lovers of the pleasures of the gun, and know more about the habits of the *Anserinæ* than all the closet naturalists I ever met. They can tell each species as soon as they hear its cry, and translate into plain English every note of a wily gander or a piping gosling. They usually keep what is called in local parlance a "rig"—that is, a number of wild geese which have been partially domesticated and

trained to act as decoys. Several of these "rigs" are found along the Atlantic Coast, from Long Island to Florida, but they are more numerous at Shinnecock Bay, near New York, than in any other part of the country, that being the great resort for the wild-fowlers of the Metropolis during the shooting season.

The decoys are generally wing-tipped birds which have been cured; but they are frequently the offspring of captives, which have bred in confinement. These are fed regularly twice a day during the shooting season; but during the summer they have a good deal of freedom in selecting their own food, for as soon as one of their wings is clipped they are allowed to roam wherever they wish. They become so accustomed to their home after awhile that they return to it every night to be fed, no matter how far out on the bay they may have gone. A good "rig" usually consists of from fifteen to forty birds of both sexes. When these are to be used they are placed in coops and taken to the shooting grounds in a boat. These grounds usually consist of bars or spits of land which run into the sea, and on which are placed coffin-like boxes of various lengths, and deep enough to allow a man to lie down in them. They are often trimmed with sedges, so as to give them as natural an appearance as possible, for if the wily geese had the most remote suspicion of their character, they would give them a wide berth. The decoys are staked out on this bar at irregular intervals, being fastened to the posts by means of a hopple, or leather strap which goes round the leg. The best caller, or honker, which is generally an old and "educated" gander, is placed some distance away from the main flock, so that he may give expression to his feelings of loneliness. A good honker of either sex is considered invaluable, for on it depends, to a large extent, the success of the day; hence, those who possess such a prize would not sell it

for two hundred dollars. A first-class caller will bring down skeins that might circle around dozens of other decoys without paying them the least attention, for if it is an experienced bird, few of its kindred will pass it by unnoticed. When the honker espies a string of its congeners overhead, it commences to cree-aunk, cree-aunk, in the most vociferous manner. Its companions soon join in the cry, and the air then resounds with their cronking melody. Those in the sky answer them, as a general rule, before they think of descending, but if they are coy, the decoys recommence their calling with redoubled vigor, and seem to say: "Oh! come down here; you'll have lots of fun and plenty to eat. Do pay us a visit; we're dying to see you."

When the wild-fowlers bring down the visitors with a load of shot, the lures actually appear to enjoy it, for they shake themselves, preen their feathers, and cackle their sense of satisfaction. They become such adepts at deceiving after awhile that nothing seems to give them greater pleasure than to see the leaden hail dealing death among their kindred. Such is the condition to which man will reduce the most innocent creatures when he employs them for his own selfish purposes! Next to the decoys, the most necessary accessory for a good day's sport is a good "swimmer" of geese. The "swimmer" is the man who sails down on birds that are bedded on the water, some distance away, and attempts, by careful manœuvring, to drive them within call of the honkers. His aim is to make them swim towards the blinds, if possible, as the chance of making a big bag is greater by that means than it would be if they were put on the wing and made to fly over the point, or even to settle among the decoys. An able "swimmer" has an instinctive talent for his business, and the manner in which he can handle his craft and geese is an interesting sight to those who care about such matters.

This preliminary explanation having been given, let us see what a day in a blind brings us. A party having taken their positions in the sneak-boxes, with feet towards the decoys, each man loads his guns and impatiently waits for the appearance of the birds. If the day is both cold and windy, he may see them moving about in vast flocks, yet not hear a note from them, as their cries are drowned by the roar of the storm. But if the weather is comparatively mild, the honker, on seeing them, tunes up his vocal organs; he is soon answered by the leaders of the wanderers, and in another minute, perhaps, the latter may wheel about and come directly to the deceiver.

"Here they come; lie low," is the command of the veteran of the party.

This is promptly obeyed, and everybody tries to force himself into the smallest compass, while his heart beats with excitement. The skein sees the callers on the beach and descends to them with rushing wings, and both soon commence chattering sociably to one another, and expressing their delight at meeting. An anxious gunner partially lifts himself up at this moment, in order to get a peep and a shot at the new arrivals, but he is soon laid prostrate again by the order of the leader, who hisses to him to keep quiet until they get away from the "stools," to prevent the latter from being shot. The geese leave the decoys in a short time, and then comes the command:

"Give them both barrels as they rise. Don't shoot them on the ground."

In another second five men rise in their coffins like so many spectres and cock their guns. As soon as the geese see them they become terribly frightened and attempt to scramble away, but the steel tubes are too quick for them, and before they can get fairly on the wing ten dead and four wing-tipped birds fall to the ground or into the

water. Then commences a scene of excitement, for the wounded attempt to escape by rushing into the bay, submerging their heads and bodies as low as possible, and swimming rapidly outward, where they would subsequently die, unless captured, as they could not rise from the water. The wild-fowlers who wear rubber boots object to parting with them, however, so they dash in after them, and open fire on them or attempt to seize them by the head. They may or may not succeed in killing them, for to shoot a swiftly moving goose, which is almost buried out of sight, is no easy matter. Some may try to capture a bird alive, in order to keep it as a decoy, and then it is a ludicrous sight to see them rushing through the bay, while the cautious goose swims ahead of them, and almost within reach, until it finally lures them into water so deep that they disappear for a moment or two. This mishap is generally greeted with laughter; and if the bird has its beak open, and looks rather pumped, some cautious member of the party shouts:

"Look out; she has her mouth open as if she were going to bite you. Kick her in the snoot if she attempts it. Don't stand any fooling from her, or we'll never see you again."

The wild-fowler, who is trembling from the ducking in the icy water, may receive this advice in silence, and allow somebody else to kill the vagrant, or he may blurt out something about going to heaven (?) and shutting up. When he reaches the shore he is likely to be admonished about the use of such terrible language, but a charitable individual may come to his aid, and say that he only uses "cuss words on goose days," and is not morally responsible for his actions on such occasions. He is then probably forgiven in a mock serious and doleful manner, and recommended to go to the nearest house and dry himself, so that he may obtain a faint idea of his future abode—a piece of advice which is generally taken.

When he departs, the remainder take their places in the sink-boxes, and remain concealed until the "swimmer" sends another gaggle towards them, or the callers lure a skein from the sky. As soon as these come within range they receive such a warm welcome that many fall to rise no more. After the rest have fled, the gunners exchange ideas, and discourse eloquently on a "beautiful double shot," the peculiar manner in which one missed a "splendid gander," or the amount of shot it took to bring down a fast-flying goose. As soon as the cripples have been shot, and picked up by the "swimmer," who remains outside in a boat, the party return to their coffins, and continue operations until late in the evening. This is exceedingly cold and silent work, for, though the icy air may shrivel them up, they cannot speak, or move hand or foot, through fear of being detected by the sharp-sighted birds; even a sneeze is considered detrimental to success. Eternal silence in the box is the price of geese; hence, waiting for them is both painful and laborious. When the wild-fowlers return home from a good day's work their sufferings are soon forgotten, and they remember nothing but the plethoric condition of their bags and the "beautiful shots" they made.

Shooting geese on an inland lake is totally different from this method, and is, on the whole, the more interesting, as it enables a person to move about and to stamp on the ground when his feet are becoming benumbed with cold. I have heard tales enough, both grave and gay, about goose shooting to fill a volume, but I must be content with relating an adventure of my own which happened in Wisconsin. I was, at the time, stopping at a farm-house, which was situated in one of the most charming sections and best wild-fowl resorts of the State. While sitting near the fire one evening, the son of the farmer, a lad about fourteen years of age, entered, and told me that a pond, a short distance away, was thronged with

wild-fowl. On hearing it I seized the farmer's muzzle-loader, and started for the pond in hot haste, hoping to get a shot at the birds. I reached it in due time, and found the boy's tale to be true, for several species of ducks, from the stately mallard to the pretty blue-winged teal, and a large gaggle of snow geese were feeding in the water, which was quite shallow, or chattering contentedly to one another. These presented a charming spectacle, and their activity and noise contrasted strongly with the silence of the forest, which was then arrayed in its most brilliant autumn colors.

Notwithstanding the beauty of the woods, I was "on murderous thoughts intent," but how to put them into execution was the next question, for the birds were too far away to enable me to shoot at them with any assured degree of success. While dodging along the shore in my efforts to get near enough to obtain a shot, I espied a small dugout concealed in the bushes, and this I pushed into the water, as its bow and sides were covered with reeds. Taking the scull in my hand, I was soon bearing down on the mass of feathers, and was in its midst in less than five minutes. The ducks seemed to think the craft was a floating bunch of sedge at first, for they only stared at it, but when they detected its true character, they rose "exulting on triumphant wings," and attempted to flee, but before they could get out of range I cut a swath through their ranks, and brought down two killed and two cripples. By the time I had secured these, every bird in the pond seemed to have fled, yet I paddled on in hopes of being able to get another shot. I had not proceeded far before I rounded a small cape, and just behind that I came suddenly upon two geese, which were sailing about in the most indifferent manner. On seeing me they attempted to rise, but as I was to the windward they had to come towards me. When they were near enough I blazed away at one, and sent it into

the water with a loud thud. Turning round to fire at the other, which had just passed me on the left, I upset the boat and went diving head foremost into an apparently unfathomable mass of reeds and mud. As soon as I had hurriedly examined the oozy bottom, I returned to the surface, but on finding that my gun was gone, I dived for it, recovered it, and again rose to the upper world, but on reaching it, I saw that my craft was floating away at a leisurely pace. I swam after it as rapidly as one arm could propel me, and when I overtook it I was nearly fagged out, for my clothing seemed an awful drag, and I could hardly use my legs, my boots being full of water. Scrambling into the stern of the boat, I set about picking up the birds that had been lost out of it, and succeeded in securing all. I then paddled ashore, and having doffed my dripping garments, I squeezed them as dry as I could, and washed the mud off my hands and face. I then ran a series of go-as-you-please races with imaginary contestants, until my blood was warmed up, when I donned my raiment and returned to the house with my trophies. On arriving there, I changed my clothing, and soon felt as comfortable as ever. Such incidents teach one that shooting has its shady as well as its bright side, and that he who would enjoy it must learn to patiently bear cold, hunger, and fatigue, and, sometimes, face danger both on land and water.

CHAPTER XII.

WILD DUCKS.

Wild ducks—Their abundance—Difference between fresh water and salt water ducks—Their food—The greenhead, or mallard—General characteristics—Breed with the domestic ducks—Habits of hybrids—Nests and eggs of the wild species—The flappers—Mode of seeking food—Large numbers of ducks poisoned annually—How to bag the birds—Ice blinds—The haunts of the ducks—Various systems for capturing them employed in the West—How to build blinds—Sink-boxes—The proper way to anchor wooden decoys—When to shoot into a flock—Live decoys—How to set out dead birds—Diving decoys—Toling ducks within range—The art of calling—The best apparatus for calling—The enemies of the wild-fowler—Difference between the shooting in the Eastern and the Western States—The best ducking grounds on the Atlantic Coast—Professional wild-fowlers at Havre de Grace—The system of shooting allowed—Planting decoys—Charges used for duck-guns—Price per day demanded for a wild-fowler's boat—The necessity of a written agreement—The best time for shooting—Bushwacking and bushwackers—Sportsmen's clubs and game dinners—A stirring spectacle on Chesapeake Bay—Retrievers—General sketches of the black mallard; gadwall, or gray duck; pintail, or sprigtail; widgeon; shovellers, or spoonbills; cinnamon teal; blue-winged teal; green-winged teal; wood, or summer duck; canvas-back; red-head, or porchard; greater scaup duck; lesser scaup duck; ring-neck, or tufted duck; whistler, or golden-eye; buffle-head; ruddy duck; harlequin duck; long-tailed duck; Steller's eider duck; spectacled eider; eider, or sea duck; king eider; white-winged coot; surf duck, or sea coot; gosander, or fish duck; sheldrake, or red-breasted merganser; hooded merganser, or saw-bill diver; —Eider down and its peculiarity—Breeding grounds of eiders—The young susceptible to domestication—Method of shooting sea ducks—Musical ducks and their song—How to cook sea ducks, and roast wild fowl.

It is doubtful if the *Anatidæ* are as abundant in any other part of the world as they are on the North American Continent, for myriads is the only word that can give

an idea of their numbers when they are engaged in their annual migratory tours from north to south and back again. Portions of the country are actually thronged with them at such times, so that they present the appearance of enormous clouds of feathers. There are also a greater number of species on the Western Continent than in any other quarter of the globe, if I remember rightly, for of the two sub-families into which the *Anatidæ* are divided, twenty-three species belong to the *Fuligulinæ*, or sea ducks, and twelve species and varieties to the *Anatinæ*, or fresh water ducks, or about forty-five in all. Both these sub-families are so distinctly marked that they may be readily distinguished apart, even if their habits were not so different. The legs of the sea ducks are, in the first instance, placed farther back than they are in their fresh water congeners, in order to give them greater swimming power; the hind toe, instead of being simple, has a small piece of skin on its lower side; the body is more densely feathered; and a thick covering of down protects the flesh from the chilling effects of very cold water. These live principally on animal matter, although some species devour both fish and vegetables; they dive for their food, which their fresh water kindred never do; they are largely maritime in their habitat, yet the majority nest near lakes and streams; and they are, as a rule, much inferior in flesh to their congeners, the exceptions being the red-head, broad-bill, canvas-back, and a few others.

The *Anatinæ* live on insects, slugs, grasses, seeds, wild rice, and other palatable vegetation; but in searching for these they never submerge the whole body, and rarely little more than the head and neck. They are fond of frequenting tide-waters sometimes, yet they seldom remain any length of time at sea, their favorite haunts being fresh water which produces a generous supply of their favorite kinds of food. They are exceedingly abun-

dant on the streams and lakes of the West, until the cold weather sets in, but after that they hie to Florida, Texas, Louisiana, and other southern regions, and remain there until the following February or March, when they return North to build their nests and rear their broods. Some of the Southern States are so thronged with them in winter that the sky is black in places, whilst its entire extent, as far as the eye can see, is peppered with the heavy teams which are engaged in "trading" between various points. One of the best species of the *Anatinæ*, and one which is much admired by sportsmen, is the greenhead, which is also called the English duck, the wild drake, and the mallard, though the latter name should only be applied to the male. It is known to most persons through its domestic representative, the main difference between them being the greater brilliancy of the hue of the body, and the brighter orange of the legs of the wild species. The male and female of the *Anas boschas* differ materially in size and color. The former has a length of about two feet, and weighs between two and a half and three and a half pounds, while the latter seldom exceeds two pounds or a little over. This species associates freely with its barn-yard congeners, and even pairs with them, but the cross breed is quite wild, and liable to leave home at any moment the fancy seizes it. Several instances are known, however, in which the hybrids have resisted all temptation to lead a vagrant life, being content with the comforts of the farm-yard until they had their necks wrung or died a natural death. Adult males of the roving species sometimes become so much attached to the domestic breed that they stop with them year after year; and cases are mentioned in which, when they did leave, they returned again when they were making their pilgrimage to the sunny South, late in the autumn. From what I have heard, I should imagine that the wild species might easily be tamed, and that the

second or third generation would manifest no desire to become roamers.

The ducks commence building their nests between the middle of March and the first of May, according to the climate of the regions where they dwell. The nests are always near a stream, lake, pond, or slough, and are as secluded as the ground will permit. They differ materially in construction, some being made of coarse grass, while others are lined inside with soft, loose feathers. The eggs number from ten to sixteen, and are like those of the domestic variety in color, being a greenish-blue. The flappers appear in May or June, and from the moment of their birth until their death they seem to be impressed with the idea that they have many foes. Even when they are mere mites, they have the bump of cautiousness so strongly developed that they often disappear under water the moment they see a person, and when they come to the surface they only show the bill, if possible; but if they get ashore, they do not care how much of the body is seen, for they run as fast as they can on open ground, and without piping, and plunge into the first hiding-place they find. They are well feathered between the first and middle of October, and strong and large enough to fly at a rapid rate for a long distance, so that they afford good shooting. When the birds congregate in the autumn, they spread out in every direction, and cover the country in such vast flocks that their numbers cannot even be estimated. When moving off to feed, their loud squawking may be heard for an hour or two in the morning, but they do not remain feeding all day during fine weather, for, after partaking of breakfast, they return to their roosting-places until three or four o'clock in the afternoon, when they sally forth again in quest of a dinner. They are not always punctual in their movements, for hunger does not compel them to leave the duckery until sundown sometimes, and

one may then have some good sport with them, if he takes a position in a shelter near their line of flight. Some farmers in the Atlantic States do not allow shooting on their land, for fear their cattle might be injured; but such prohibition is unknown in the West, for the birds are so numerous and destructive there that they are frequently poisoned, as the geese are, by soaking grain in strychnine and scattering it near their roosting-places. Ducks, being great feeders, remain in the stubble fields all day during murky or rainy weather, and chatter away to one another in a low, crooning tone, as if they were discussing the state of the atmosphere or congratulating one another on the absence of foes and the abundance of food.

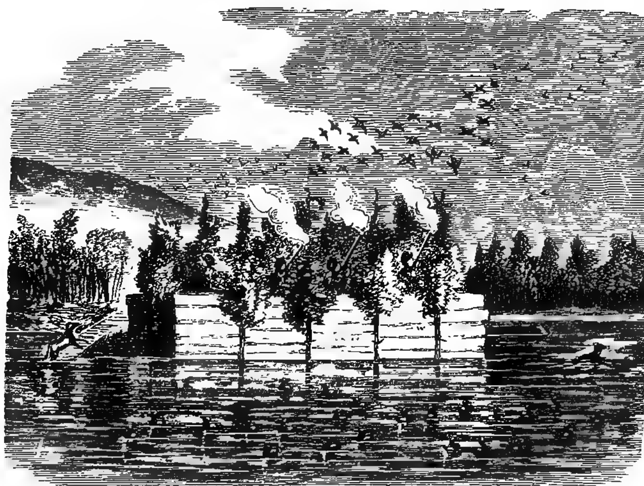
They fly quite low on such days, so that a man who is behind a blind can bag them in large numbers. They prefer fields where the cornstalks are scattered about to those in which they stand in stacks, owing to their fear of concealed enemies. The wild-fowler should lie down on his back in such places, and remain immovable until the flocks come almost directly over him, then rise into a sitting posture, and blaze away at the thickest of the mass. This system of shooting cannot, however, be successful, unless the clothing of the sportsman is of a neutral tint, such as a brownish or sedge color, as the ducks notice any unusual hue in the landscape and give it a wide berth, even though it be nothing more dangerous than the burned stump of a tree. When ducks become familiar with standing corn-stalks, these can be used as blinds, for in this, as in other instances in life, familiarity breeds contempt; but care should be taken that the blinds are not too solid in appearance, as that would immediately arouse the suspicion of the wary birds and cause them to avoid their vicinity. When the ducks congregate on the ice in winter, some excellent shooting can be had near air-holes, provided a person is

behind an ice-blind, for in coming near such spots they sweep partially around before alighting, and present their sides. A volley poured into them at that time is sure to bring down several, for the wing-tipped strike the ground so heavily that some are killed by the fall, and those that are not may be readily disposed of. Ducks frequently seek the shelter of timber in blustry weather. Large bags can then be made near almost any woodland stream or tarn; and also in the spring, when the lower lands are inundated by the rise of the rivers, as they resort thither to feed on the vegetation and insects that float on the water. When driven from such places by shooting, they return in a short time, either singly, in pairs, or in trips, and if the sportsman has a good shelter he may tumble them over as they pass him, or when they are preparing to alight. Whatever the season may be, it is necessary for a man to keep as much out of sight as possible, to avoid making a noise, and to have his clothes as near the color of the ground and woods as he can. The clothing should be white in winter, and a sedge, drab, or butternut hue at all other times.

The ordinary methods employed for capturing ducks in the West are similar to those for bagging geese. These are, shooting from blinds, with or without decoys; shooting from sneak-boxes, sneak-boats, and punts. A blind is generally made of the branches of trees, brushwood, weeds, grass, leaves, and such other vegetation as would give it the appearance of a natural thicket. The boughs are stuck into the ground, close together, and all openings, which are likely to allow the gunner to be seen, are closed with the lighter material. A shelter of this kind should not be higher than the shoulders of a man when he stands up, as he needs a clear space to enable him to note the movements of the ducks and to handle his gun promptly. Others are made of boards, screened with brush or trees, in order to present as natural an appear-

ance as possible. A blind of white cloth can be used to advantage in winter, if the ground is covered with snow, for it not only affords shelter, but is so deceiving at a distance that the birds approach it without hesitation.

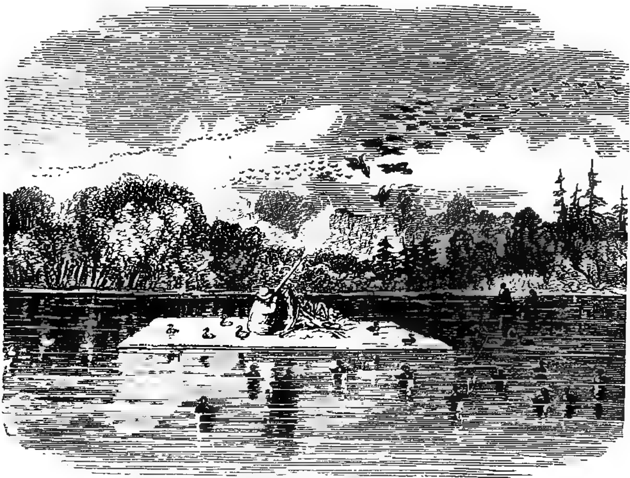
The sneak-box, sink-box, or float, is a sort of wooden coffin, about six feet long, two feet wide, and thirteen or fourteen inches in depth, which has wide flaps to keep it afloat and prevent the water from running into it. It is



SHOOTING FROM BLINDS.

generally anchored in shallow water, and in the most advantageous position, and is painted as near the hue of the fluid in which it rests as possible. It is sunk so low, by means of weights, that the entrance is on a level with the surface of the stream or lake, so that it cannot be seen at any distance. It is also occasionally covered with brush or sedges. The decoys are placed around this in the form of a triangle, at a distance varying from fifteen to twenty-five yards, but a few are posted on the plat-

form or flaps, in order to induce the teams or paddlings to come as near as possible. The greater portion of the decoys ought to be anchored to the leeward, as ducks, in the majority of cases, swing to the wind before alighting, and sail or float for a short distance before they strike the water to rest. This habit brings them into the most favorable position for the wild-fowler, as he can handle his gun with greater readiness to the left than to the



FLOAT, OR SINK-BOX.

right, and, as a matter of course, make larger bags. I have known a man to kill forty-seven with four barrels, before the ducks could fairly get on the wing, and the same individual claimed to have shot two hundred and eighteen in a day, from a blind. When the wooden decoys are "planted," each ought to be anchored by means of a piece of lead, weighing four or five ounces, and be attached to the box by a fine, strong line. Dead and wing-tipped ducks make capital decoys, especially the latter,

as they keep steadily calling to their passing companions, and these being exceedingly gregarious, answer the summons, only to meet their death. The domestic variety are also useful for calling, but if they are to be fastened to stakes, either on land or in the water, they should be accustomed to the use of the tether for some time at home before being taken into the field, otherwise they will strain at the cord, and, by their sprawling and squawking, scare away all the birds that see or hear them. If they have been trained for their business, however, they take matters easy, and seem to actually delight in bringing their wild kindred within range of the leaden hail, if one were to judge from their persistent and clamorous calling. Dead ducks, when used on land, ought to have their heads placed under their wings, in order to give them as natural an appearance of resting as possible, or the heads may be propped up with cornstalks or sharp branchlets stuck in the ground. The system of decoying, so common in Holland, of throwing trained tame ducks into the air when a wild flock passes by, is not practised in the West, for turf huts are not often used as blinds, and few market-hunters know anything of the devices practised by the Dutch *huttiers.* Diving decoys, which seem to be unknown in Holland, are occasionally used, however, especially in calm weather. These are readily made and very effective.

The only materials necessary for manufacturing them are a canvas bag, capable of holding a few pounds of sand or stone, a long line, and a pulley-block. The latter is attached to the mouth of the bag, and the cord is run through the pulley-block, and fastened under the breast of the decoy by means of a screw-eye. The bag is then filled with sand or stones, and dropped in the water on the shooting ground; the end of the cord is next taken to the blind, and when ducks approach on the wing, or alight out of range in the water, the string is

pulled, and the decoy dives almost as naturally as a live bird. When the ducks see it diving, as if for food, they approach it without hesitation, only to learn what a deceptive world this is. It is especially effective on a calm day, as it agitates the water, and its movements can be seen quite a long distance.

Toling and calling are other methods employed for bringing ducks within range. The former can be done in two ways, but the simplest is to wave a gaudy handkerchief slowly over a blind or from the midst of a clump of shrubbery. Inquisitiveness being the leading characteristic of the *canards*, they begin to move shoreward in dense masses to see what the strange object can be, but when they come to within a short distance of the land, the majority depart in a hurry without having satisfied their curiosity, while others remain to increase the sportsman's larder. The second method of toling is to get a dog trained to keep silent, to run after chips or pieces of bread thrown along the shore, and to gambol about in as sportive a manner as possible. The ducks, on seeing his antics, advance and wheel, and rise on their wings in the water, then halt and stare with an expression of the liveliest curiosity and the most intense excitement. The leaders seem to communicate their fatuous enthusiasm to those behind, and this increases as they press shoreward, until the dense columns seem, at length, to become maniacal in their demonstrations of feeling, for they deploy in every direction, advance and retreat, cross and re-cross each other in heavy masses, and wheel to the right or left according as the dog moves. The concealed gunner watches their movements with the keenest interest until he finds them grouped in serried columns a few yards from the shore, then, rising slowly, he pours the contents of his guns into them, and cuts a swath through their ranks as clean as a mower would lay the grass. The spectacle they pre-

sent is very beautiful, but the most interesting part of it to the fowler is that which ends in havoc and slaughter. Thousands of ducks are killed in this manner annually, so that toling is an important branch of the wild-fowler's art. Some persons tie a handkerchief around a dog's body, allowing a part of it to stream out behind like a queve, if the animal is not strongly marked enough to attract the attention of the ducks. This device is usually successful, especially with red-heads. The canvas-backs, red-heads, and broad-bills are more inquisitive than the other species, and are, of course, more easily toled. Some persons are so expert in calling ducks that they can imitate the various tones of the principal species with their mouth, but these, and they are very few, have to practice for a long time before they become perfect in this accomplishment. Others who are not so highly gifted in imitative power use squawkers, but, unless they have some experience, they are more likely to scare the birds away than to bring them within range. One of the best callers is made of a tube of bamboo, about seven or eight inches long, which has a short tongue of brass at one end and a grooved plug at the other. This is made to order by dealers in sportsmen's goods, if it is not in stock. The Swiss bird-call is also spoken well of by some persons, but I have never seen it used in wild-fowling. In the Far West, however, where ducks are numbered by the million, and are comparatively safe from all foes except an occasional red or white sportsman and a wily fox, little precaution is needed to make a large bag, for the veriest tyro can do it if he will only use about four drachms of powder, an ounce of No. 2 or 3 shot, and a solid, well-made, ten-gauge gun. The great enemies of the wild-fowler, and the number is by no means small, are minks, skunks, crows, hogs, and owls, for should these find his trophies while he is temporarily absent, they would make a feast of them, and injure many more than they could

eat. Minks and crows seem to be the worst, so the sportsman has no scruples about killing them if he sees them near the ducking grounds.

The wild-fowl shooting of the West differs materially from that of the East, for in the former region the birds are generally shot near ponds and streams, or in the stubble fields, whereas they are shot along the sea-coast or the bays and rivers connecting with it, in the latter. Men use ordinary shoulder-guns in the West, but in the East they prefer small columbiads, known as duck-guns, which are capable of slaughtering a team or a paddling at a time. This difference in the systems of shooting is one reason, in my opinion, why Western sportsmen are superior to those of the Atlantic States in wing-shooting, but the latter excel them in bagging birds on water, as they are better judges of distance on that element. Men who may be capital shots on land often make a poor display on water, and *vice versa;* and those who can put up heavy scores in regions where ducks fly close to the ground or near the shore, may hardly be able to count at all in places where the birds are shy. Some are also better at killing one species than another, as much of their success depends on the birds they have practised on; hence, one cannot judge of a person's dexterity with the gun until he has seen him try it on all kinds of game. It is a truism that every sportsman has his favorite bird, for he who may be good at ducks, snipe, or geese, may not be able to do much with quail, ruffed grouse, or turkeys. I have even known men who could make a big bag of ducks in flight-shooting, who could scarcely do anything with those bedded in the water, simply because they could not measure distance well, and did not know how to aim so as to produce the best result. The Western wild-fowler has one decided advantage over his Eastern co-laborer in duck-shooting, and that is, that he can have good sport with bay-birds during the middle of the

day, when the ducks have ceased trading, whereas the latter must remain idle during that time or be content with pot-shots at a vagrant goose or *canard*.

The principal wild-fowling stations on the Atlantic Coast are Brigantine, Barnegat, Currituck, and Havre de Grace, the latter being the headquarters of those professional wild-fowlers who use sink-boxes on the Chesapeake Bay, which is by far the best duck ground on the eastern part of the Continent. About forty of these men at Havre de Grace pay a license of twenty dollars a year for the privilege of using sink-boxes on the river during legalized days, which are Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays after the first of November until the season closes in March. The outfit of these men generally consists of a small sailing sloop, ranging from thirty to fifty feet in length, a flat-bottomed rowboat, a sink-box, and from three hundred to five hundred decoys. It requires at least three men to handle one of these outfits properly; hence, each vessel is a little hunting colony in itself. Some of the wild-fowlers live aboard their boats throughout the season, but others do not go aboard until the night before the shooting is permitted, and then they cannot go to the grounds before three A. M., nor can they commence work until an hour before sunrise. They are allowed to fire away, however, until half an hour after sunset, provided their sink-boxes are half a mile from the shore; if they are not, the owners are liable to be arrested and fined or imprisoned. Several craft anchor within half a mile of the shore during the night, and when the clock strikes three, the crews make preparations for the labors of the day by "planting" the decoys as soon as it is light enough to do so, and sinking their boxes. It takes three men about an hour to complete this preliminary work, and when that is done it is about time to commence shooting.

The boxes are mostly single, that is, only one man can

shoot from them at a time, yet some are double, but these are not as good as the others, as two persons are more readily seen than one, hence the ducks do not decoy to them as well as they might. Most of the men carry two or three guns, and their general method of using them is to give the birds the first one when they settle in the water, the second when they rise, and the third as they fly away. The charges which they use vary considerably, but some of the most experienced consider five drachms of powder and an ounce and a half of No. 4 chilled shot a good load for a ten-bore gun; and they give the preference to Ely's wire cartridges for the killing of cripples, as it is considered effective up to a hundred yards. The sloops are generally anchored about a quarter of a mile from the sink-boxes, and as they always keep a man on the lookout, they are ready to respond to any signals from the shooting parties in a few minutes. The first three hours of the morning are considered equal to the remainder of the day, for making a big bag, as the birds are active and hungry then, and decoy readily to the numerous lures in the water. It is a common thing for an ordinary shot to kill from fifty to a hundred birds in this short time, and perhaps double that number in twelve hours, and as these sell at prices varying from forty cents to two dollars a pair, it is evident that the wild-fowlers reap a rich financial harvest during the open season.

A hundred dollars a day is not an unusual sum to earn, and forty and fifty dollars are quite common, if we judge by the fact that these men will not, as a rule, give their boat and their own services for less than twenty dollars a day to a sportsman, while some charge as high as a hundred dollars, the average being forty dollars. In making arrangements with professionals, it is best to have a written agreement drawn up, and everything throughly understood, else they may impose on a man, especially if he has delicacy of feelings, and dislikes huckstering. The

novice who enters a sink-box for the first time is certain to render a poor account of himself, as he is sure to miscalculate the distance and to think the birds are quite near when they are far beyond range. If he bags twenty in a morning he may consider himself fortunate, yet his experienced co-laborer may score five times that number. The best shooting, so far as making a big bag is concerned, is obtained in the earlier part of the season, as the birds become more shy and wary after the slaughtering commences. A person may depend on securing a larger number on Monday than any other day in the week, owing to the fact that they are not molested during the two preceding days, and are, as a result, more confiding. After the first of January, however, this advantage ceases, as men are allowed to shoot each Saturday also, until the season closes.

Sportsmen find their position in the sink-boxes exceedingly disagreeable, especially if the day is very cold, as they have to lie perfectly still on the back or side, and listen and watch until their ears and eyes become painful from the intensity of their efforts. The only opportunity they have of moving is when they lift themselves up to fire at the birds, or when they signal to the sloop to send over the row boat and some men to pick up the dead and kill the cripples. The crew are generally ready to relieve gentlemen whenever they get tired of their cold work and cramped position, yet any contract made with them should contain clauses specifying that they must promptly answer all signals from the sink-boxes; that they must commence work at the proper time in the morning, and continue until after sunset; that they must supply proper provisions aboard the vessel; and that one of the crew must have a gun with which to kill the wounded.

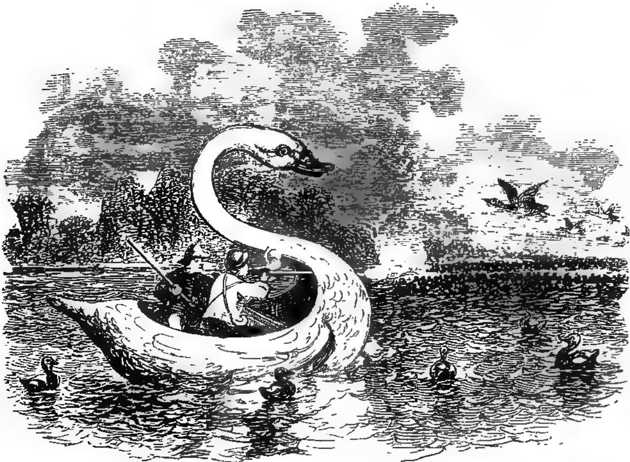
Those who wish to "bushwack" ducks will find that system much cheaper than to hire a sloop and sink-boxes. Bushwacking simply means sculling towards a paddling

of ducks in a boat that has a screen around it high enough to conceal the fowler and the man at the oar; or in a craft which resembles a huge swan, and is accompanied by decoys, which are placed on each side. The latter is only large enough to contain two men, and one of these shoots while the other uses the oar through an aperture in the rear part of the mock swan, to prevent it from being seen by the birds. A novice is more likely to make a big bag of canvas-back ducks from either of these contrivances than from a sink-box, especially on calm days, as the birds do not seem to fear it, and await its arrival with a feeling of curiosity rather than alarm. The men who shoot in this manner use from fifty to one hundred decoys, and when they have "planted" these they stand off until the flocks alight, then scull down on them, and blaze away until the last bird has got beyond range. The services of the "bushwackers" can generally be secured at sums ranging from ten to fifteen dollars a day, decoys and boats included, and, perhaps, for less, when the best part of the season is over.

A great many sportsmen enjoy their shooting from the shore, generally behind blinds, by paying a small license fee to the State; but if any of them dared to violate the game laws they would soon find themselves in trouble, for policemen are stationed in cabins all along the shore, and they are prompt in arresting transgressors. The best "shooting points" along Chesapeake Bay, are occupied by clubs of sportsmen, who rent them year after year, if not for a long series of years, and who have erected comfortable quarters for themselves. The shares in some of these clubs are so highly appreciated that they sell at a thousand dollars each, and much more if they are the property of "high-toned affairs," to use the vernacular. The game dinners of some of these clubs cannot be excelled in any part of the world, and whoever would know how wild-fowl, terrapins, and terrapin eggs should be

served, ought to pay them a visit, or sit down to one of their repasts. Mere eating and drinking are not everything with the sportsmen, however, for songs and stories, and many a flash of wit enliven the festive board.

No country, in my opinion, equals the United States in the preparation of game dinners, and Paris cannot even compare with Baltimore in this particular line of cookery. Epicurianism, so far as it relates to game, has been



SWAN-BOAT.

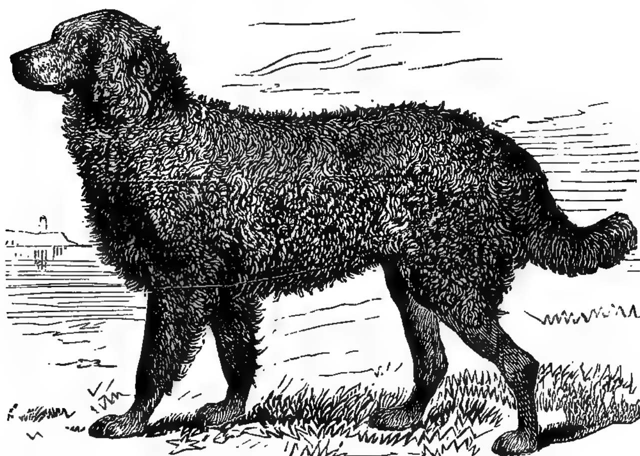
brought to the highest standard in the latter city, and few *bon vivants* are found there who cannot discourse learnedly and eloquently on the delicacy of a canvas-back duck, the fulness of turtle soup, the ripeness of turtle eggs, the flavor of celery, and the bouquet of sherry or Bordeaux—which are the usual wines consumed at dinners. Although all the large hotels throughout the country boast of their tables, I doubt if any of them equal those of Baltimore, when the shooting season opens, in November, for persons may then find on their bills of fare

nearly every species of edible bird indigenous to the Atlantic States, and these are prepared in such a manner that an epicure of the old school would almost faint from joy on eating them.

Few scenes are more interesting than that witnessed on the Chesapeake during the wild-fowling season, for the sky is then dotted with dense clouds of squawking ducks of many species, honking geese, stately swans, and whooping cranes and herons, while vessels, boats, and decoys ride on the water, numerous whitish puffs of smoke float in the air, and sharp detonations ring throughout the land and river like the sharp volleys of heavy bodies of skirmishers engaged in battle. Activity is visible everywhere, for it is a regular campaign against the masses of wild-fowl that throng the sky and water. I have heard that a man standing near the shore could hear the reports of between five hundred and a thousand guns at a time when the season was at its height; that over five thousand persons were engaged in wild-fowling along the Maryland side of the Chesapeake during the winter and early spring, and that if all who fired off a gun there were enumerated, the number would exceed ten thousand, even by excluding those who shot from the shores of Virginia. This may give an idea of the abundance of birds in the region, and the terrific havoc committed among them. They are, in fact, shipped by the tens of tons to the northern cities, where they are sold at such low rates that the humblest of the working classes can enjoy game dinners very frequently, and at a cost little beyond what they would pay for beef or mutton. The shipments do not include ducks alone, as wild geese are also numerous, and swans are not uncommon. All species of shore-birds, such as the snipe, plover, curlew, sandpiper, tattler, and many others, help to swell the wild-fowler's bag, for these are often almost as abundant as leaves at Vallambrosa, and, being appreciated by epicures, they bring good prices.

If a person would become satiated with wild-fowling, he has only to visit Chesapeake or Delaware Bay, or such States as Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Oregon, and California, and Florida and Texas in winter, for the birds in these regions may be compared to the sands of the sea, if so bold a simile is permissible.

Good retrievers are essential to success in duck shooting from the shore, for, without them, many birds would



CHESAPEAKE BAY DOG.

be lost. The favorite retrieving dogs along the coast are the Chesapeake Bay breed, which cannot be excelled for work in cold or heavy water, and which, when trained, have no rivals in their special business, as they are strong, courageous, and very intelligent. Poodles are not used, notwithstanding their many excellent qualities, and Irish retrievers are also comparatively scarce.

Having mentioned the systems of wild-fowling practised throughout the Continent, I may as well resume a short description of the various species of ducks,

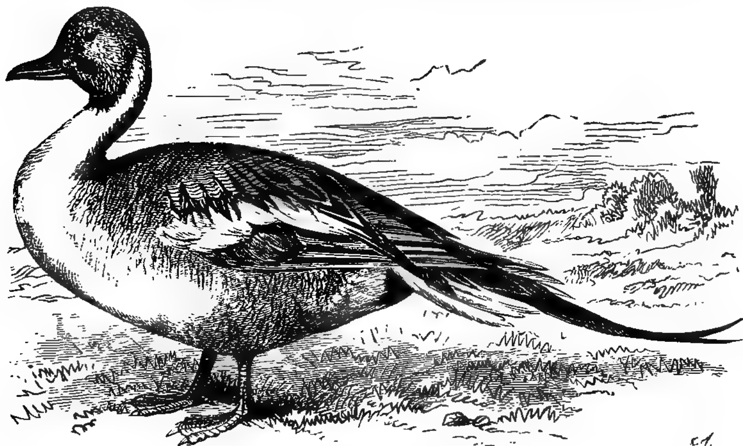
so that amateurs may recognize them when they see them.

The next of kin to the green-head is the black mallard (*Anas obscurus*), which is also known as the dusky and the black duck. This resembles the female of the preceding species, but is much darker; the feet have a reddish orange hue; the mandibles are yellowish-green, and it weighs about three pounds. It is comparatively scarce in the West, but is rather common in the Southwest, especially in Texas. It is generally shot from concealment, and large bags are rarely made, as it moves in small teams and takes little notice of decoys.

The gadwall, or gray duck (*Chaulelasmus streperus*), is abundant in the West. Its bill is bluish-black; the feet are a dull orange; the webs are dusky; the head is a light yellowish-red; the general color of the body is a mixture of black and white, and the middle wing-coverts are chestnut, but the greater coverts are black. The male attains a length of about twenty-two inches, and a weight of nearly two pounds; the female is much smaller. It answers readily to the mallard call, and alights to mallard decoys, and, being less shy than others of its family, it may be approached rather easily, if it is not kept in a constant state of terror by pot and market hunters. Its flesh is excellent, and is considered by epicures to equal that of the mallard.

The pintail duck (*Dafila acuta*), which is locally known as the sprigtail, sharptail, and water pheasant, is exceedingly common everywhere west of the Mississippi River, but is scarce on the eastern seaboard. It seems to be fonder of sheltered streams than open lakes or ponds, so that it might be called a river duck. Its bill is black; the iris is brown; the feet are grayish-blue; the head and upper neck are greenish-brown; an oblique band of white decorates each side of the neck; the lower neck and under parts are white, and the back is grayish. The tail is com-

posed of fourteen tapering feathers, and the two in the middle project far beyond the others. Its call is a low, plaintive whistle of one note, which is repeated two or three times. It is one of the most graceful members of its family, and also one of the best for the table. It associates freely with the green-heads, especially in streams, and flocks of both species may be frequently found feeding and roosting together. It readily answers to the call-note of the mallard, and seldom passes decoys without



PINTAIL DUCK.

paying them a visit. When this duck moves in teams, or flocks, it is rather unsuspicious, as if numbers gave it confidence, but if shot at much it becomes exceedingly wary. Bunches decoy much better than single birds, but to make a good bag, the stools, or decoys, ought to be planted to the windward, as the birds have a habit of circling to the leeward before settling. They are harder to kill on the wing than the green-heads, as their flight is much more rapid and erratic, and they indulge in wheeling motions that are peculiar to themselves. They have

not so much vitality as some of their congeners, hence they do not require such heavy shot, No. 5 being sufficiently large for shooting them.

The American widgeon, or bald-pate (*Mareca americana*), is not only abundant, but an excellent table bird. It may be readily recognized by its bald, or whitish head, its grayish neck, brownish-red breast, white under parts, and light brownish-red and brownish-black upper parts. It weighs less than two pounds; decoys promptly to mallard stools, and answers the mallard call. Having small vital power, and the habit of clustering together when flying, several may be killed with one volley.

The shoveller, or spoonbill, (*Spatula clypeata*), seldom congregates in such large flocks as the preceding species. It is fond of the society of the mallards, and decoys to the stools and calls of the latter. When teams are in flight they keep close together; hence it is an easy matter to bag a large number with both barrels, for a slight blow is sufficient to kill one. When rising from the water in a state of alarm, they bound directly upward for a distance of several feet before fleeing. They are not very wary, and being poor divers, they try to escape by hiding in weeds, rather than by getting under water, as others do. They may be readily recognized by the form of the bill, which is twice as wide at the tip as at the base. They have reddish feet; a grayish-black bill, tinged with yellow; the head and the upper part of the neck are of a deep-green hue, with purplish reflections; the forebreast is white; the bill, a purplish-chestnut; the wing coverts are blue; the lower tail-coverts are greenish-black, with green and blue reflections; the axillaries and lower wing-coverts are white; and the tail is composed of fourteen acute feathers, the two in the middle being a little longer than those next to them. The male has a length of about twenty-one inches, and often weighs over a pound and a half. The female, which closely resembles the

greenhead of the same sex, is about seventeen inches long, and weighs from sixteen to eighteen ounces.

The cinnamon, or red-breasted teal (*Querquedula cyanoptera*), whose range extends from the northern to the southern end of the Continent, west of the Rocky Mountains, is a handsome creature. Its head, neck, and under parts are a rich purplish-chestnut, which merges into black on the belly. Its eggs are oval, and much smaller at one end than the other. They are a pale-buff in color, and devoid of the grayish or drab hue so generally noticeable in the eggs of the duck family. This species mingles freely with the mallard, the blue-winged, and the green-winged teal, especially during the winter when it seeks a southern home. Thousands of these birds may then be seen paddling about in some tranquil stream or lake, and daintily picking up the seeds that float on the surface, or straining the water through their bills to secure the minute insects that thrive in it, while they gabble sociably to each other. The cinnamon teal has been found in the most northern Territories of the United States, and as far south as the Straits of Magellan, so it seems to be at home throughout the length of the New World.

The blue-winged teal (*Querquedula discors*) has a bluish-black bill, dull-yellowish feet, and dusky webs. The upper part of the head is black; there is a small patch of white on the side of the head before the eye; the back is brownish-black, glossed with green; the wing-coverts are sky-blue with a metallic lustre; the lower parts are a pale-reddish-orange, shaded on the breast with purplish-red, and thickly spotted with black; the tail feathers are chocolate-brown, slightly glossed with green; the axillar feathers, a few of the lower wing-coverts, and a patch on the side of the rump are pure white; and the lower tail-coverts are brownish-black. It has a length of sixteen inches, and a weight of twelve ounces or more. This

species, which is very abundant in the regions bordering the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, east of the Rocky Mountains, is considered to rank next to the canvas-back and red-head in delicacy of flesh. It is one of the first of its family to appear from the north, and as it moves in vast teams, it affords splendid sport. Market hunters are its greatest enemies, for they slaughter it by the thousands, owing to the constant demand for it.

When "springs" are startled, they rise suddenly from the water and flee at a high rate of speed, but they may not go far before settling again. As they huddle closely when on the wing, a man may bag twenty or more in one round, but it must be delivered at the proper time, that is, when they have just passed, or when the bulk of the team is in front, as they fly rapidly and scatter in all directions after the first shot, though they may reunite shortly afterwards. Any shot from No. 7 to 9 is heavy enough to use, as they are easily killed. They drop to mallard decoys and readily answer the mallard call, which is not unlike their own, though it is not so short, thin, and high. They may be easily approached on the water by employing ordinary precaution, but they are rather shy on the wing, and always ready to flee from the vicinity of any unusual sight or sound. Their favorite haunts are ponds and shallow streams and lakes where insects, wild rice, duck grass, and pond lilies thrive, and the more muddy the bottom and tranquil the water, the better they like it. They are generally pursued in screened, flat-bottomed skiffs, and fired at the moment they rise in a bunch, as a person cannot afford to give them any chances, owing to their speed. They are also shot from blinds when they are trading, and if they fly close to the ground one is almost certain of making a big haul with both barrels. Being found from Manitoba to Florida, they afford sport in some part of the country throughout

the open season, and are therefore diligently sought for by market hunters.

The green-winged teal (*Querquedula cariolensis*), which receives its name from the rich green hue of the speculum, has a black bill, light-bluish-gray feet, and a short, rounded tail of sixteen acuminate feathers of a brownish-gray color. The head and the upper part of the neck are chestnut-brown; a broad band of glossy-green, with whitish borders, is found on each side of the head; the under parts are whitish; the forebreast has black, circular spots; the upper parts and flanks are beautifully undulated with black and white bars; and the wings are brownish-gray. An adult male has a length of about fifteen inches, and weighs from eight to eleven ounces. This species is remarkable for the beauty of its plumage, and its swift, graceful movements in flight. Its feathers, like those of the mallard, are in active demand for making artificial flies, and large quantities are shipped to Europe for that purpose. The flesh is not considered equal to that of the blue-wing, yet the difference is very slight, for both live on the same class of food, and associate together in every part of the country where they are found. One reason for the epicurean distinction may be attributed to the habitat of the green-wing, for it is more maritime than its congener, and frequents tidewater and salt creeks near the coast, which the other never does. It is also hardier than the blue-wing, for it tarries longer in the north and returns from the south earlier in the spring. It is shot in the same manner as the others, and large bags can generally be made, as it flies in close order, decoys with the utmost alacrity, and promptly returns to the call of the deceiver who sits with a loaded shotgun behind a blind, ready to assault it in the most cold-blooded manner. Its notes are short, sharp, and rapid.

The wood, or summer duck (*Aix sponsa*), is found all over the country, but I have not seen it so abundant any-

where as in the dense forests of the Northwest, where it is safe from all foes except boys and birds of prey, for it is rarely pursued by sportsmen. I have come upon its nests in old trees, or in those in which woodpeckers had bored deep holes, and every time I saw one I enjoyed a keen sense of delight, for it was pleasant to note how earnestly the matrons watched my approach, and with what tenacity they held to their quarters. I frequently approached them to within a few feet before the they became alarmed enough to take to flight, and then they darted rapidly through the trees, uttering their peculiar whistling note, which differs radically from that of any of their congeners. The young are taken to the water in her bill by the mother, soon after they are hatched, and while they are swimming about she pays them the most devoted attention, and keeps them at her side by steady calling, whenever they manifest an inclination to pursue alluring flies too far. She hastens to cover at the least alarm, for, though she and her brood can dive very well, they never resort to this means of escape unless wounded, and even then they are more liable to seek shelter in weeds and bushes than in the water. When the ducklings are three or four months old they accompany the adults in their flights to distant fields in search of food, and mingle with the other teals. They are not so gregarious as their congeners, however, hence it is rare to see them in large flocks. They do not decoy readily to stools or to calling, and this, combined with their rather solitary habits, prevents persons from pursuing them as they do other ducks, although their flesh is tender and juicy. They are shot principally for the sake of their feathers, these being in active demand for making artificial flies for trout, grayling, and salmon fishing. Wood ducks are undoubtedly the most beautiful members of their family indigenous to the northern half of the Continent, for they can scarcely be excelled in rich and harmonious hues by

the most brilliant birds of the tropics. Some of the species of ducks enumerated do not go west of the Rocky Mountains in anything like very large teams, the greatest exception being the blue-winged teal, its place beyond that chain being occupied by the cinnamon teal.

The *Fuligulinæ* are both numerous and widely dispersed, but only a few species have any attractions for the sportsman, as their flesh, owing to the character of their food, is not fit to be eaten. The best known and most highly appreciated is the canvas-back (*Fuligula valisneria*), whose gastronomical reputation is higher than that of any other member of its family. It also occupies the most exalted position in the estimation of the lovers of the gun, for it is wary, active, and a regular die-hard. The male of this species has a blackish-brown head, a dusky bill, which is longer than the head, and high at the base; the iris is red; the nostrils are median; it has more light than dark colors, and the black is broken into very small dots. This species is abundant everywhere in the West and Southwest, and is slaughtered in every conceivable manner from toling to "sneak-boxing," "jumping," "fire-hunting," and "blind" shooting. Huge swivel guns were formerly used in its destruction, but these have been suppressed by law in some places, and any person using them now is liable to fine or imprisonment. The birds seem to have become aware of this fact by some system of reasoning, for they frequently keep within range of these demi-cannons, quack their defiance at the pot-hunters, and seem to say, "Fire, if you dare; if you do you'll get ten days; just try your old gun; we don't care for you, anyhow," and duck words of similar import. Where the law is not enforced against the batteries, enormous numbers of ducks are killed at long range, and this makes the survivors so wild that it is almost impossible to get a shot at them with a shoulder gun. Another mean device invented by man for their

destruction is the "night reflector," which consists of a large reflector placed behind a naptha lamp, and mounted on the bow of a boat. The pot-hunters who use this row out into the stream where the ducks are bedded for the night, and the poor creatures, becoming fascinated by its glare, swim towards it from every direction, and strike against the boat in their efforts to come as near it as they can. When they are massed together the pot-hunters open fire upon them, and keep it up until they have flown beyond range. The number slaughtered depends, of course, on the calibre of the weapon used, but from twenty to forty per round is an ordinary bag. These men may succeed in getting into a dozen beds during the night, so the havoc they commit may be readily inferred. I have heard that two of them killed fifteen hundred between the hours of seven P. M. and three A. M. with four guns, while the largest number I ever heard of being killed from sneak-boxes during the day by two men, armed with six guns, was five hundred and sixteen. This wholesale system of assassination is, of course, execrated by sportsmen, and even by those who liberally supply themselves and their neighbors with wild-fowl. Many do not hesitate to express their feelings about it in the most forcible manner, when they have an opportunity, by planting a load of shot in the body of the nefarious "fire-hunter." Shooting from blinds is considered legitimate sport, and when the ducks are abundant a person ought to have all the amusement he wants behind these. The canvas-backs are shot over decoys, which are often placed on their feeding grounds, the sportsmen being under cover; but on streams and lakes they are frequently sculled or sailed upon in flat boats, covered with reeds or bushes, and fired upon as they rise.

Like the remainder of the family, the canvas-backs are more restless and active in wet or murky than in fine weather, and it is at such times that the largest bags are

made, as they decoy in fine style, answer the "call" promptly, and are much less cautious than they are on sunny days. They arrive in the Atlantic States from the north between the first and the middle of October, but they are constant summer residents in the Territories beyond the Rocky Mountains, as they nest in the vast and silent regions extending from Manitoba to Alaska. When they commence migrating, they move in immense masses, and cover all open waters where their favorite food, wild celery and wild rice, grow in abundance. They rarely stop anywhere but in open water; and if they are disturbed much on the feeding ground they leave it at once for safer quarters. Even the pot-hunting method of capturing them, by means of submerged nets placed on their feeding flats, is sure to drive them away in a short time, and the probability is that they will give such places a wide berth for the future; whereas, if they are shot only while "trading" from point to point, they will stay until the cold weather sends them south for the winter. When these birds live on wild rice, grain, and wild celery, they become exceedingly fat, juicy, and tender, but if they secure their food in tide-water marshes, their flesh is little better than that of mergansers. I have seen them so fat in some of the Western and Southern States that they could hardly rise from the water, and when they did, it was with much labor, and, evidently, against their will. They are readily approached when in that condition, as they do not take to flight until they are thoroughly alarmed. It is easier to bag them on cold, dark mornings, than when the weather is warm and bright, as they cling to their roosting places with greater tenacity, and will stand several rounds before they decide to leave.

A close ally of the canvas-back, and one which is not readily distinguished from it by a novice, is the red-head, or pochard (*Fuligula ferina*, var. *americana*), yet it may be easily identified by its difference in plumage, the form

of the head, the hue of the iris, and the length and color of the bill. The male of the red-head has a puffy head, which slopes abruptly to the base of the bill, its hue being a chestnut-red, with bronzy reflections. The bill, which is a pale, grayish-blue, with a dark tip, is broad, depressed, and shorter than the head; the nostrils are within the basal half, and the iris is orange-yellow, not red, as in the canvas-back. The forepart of the body, the rump, the tail, and the wings, are black; the under parts are white; the scapulars and sides are whitish, undulated with black, and the speculum is bluish-black. It has a length of about twenty inches, and weighs two and a half pounds, whereas the adult canvas-back is about twenty-two inches long, and ranges in weight from three to nearly four pounds. The female is duller in hue than the male, and both sexes may be readily distinguished from the other ducks by the form of the bill. The feet are a dull, grayish-blue; the webs are dusky, and the claws black.

The red-heads rank next to the canvas-backs in daintiness of flesh, and command a high price in the market. Few, except epicures, could distinguish the meat of one from that of the other, however, as both species live on the same class of food. They dive for this in the most dexterous manner, when it is under water; and a pleasant sight they present when thousands of them are bobbing up and down in search of it. The red-heads are easily toled, their inquisitiveness being exceeded only by the black-heads, and approached by the canvas-backs. They tole readily to a red or black handkerchief by day, and a white one by night, and become so maniacally excited about the antics of a dog or a fox that they sometimes come within fifteen or twenty feet of the shore, if the water is deep enough to permit them to swim. When they wheel sideways is the proper time to give them a volley, for thirty or forty, if not more, may then be bagged in one round. Some persons tie a handkerchief

about a dog when he is employed in toling, as that increases his efficiency, by making the birds more inquisitive. These ducks assemble in large flocks during the autumn, and mingle freely with all their congeners on the feeding grounds, but, when flying, they generally keep by themselves. They move at a regular rate of speed, and closely grouped, when on the wing, and this, as in the case of the other species having the same habit, enables a man to bring down ten or fifteen at a time with both barrels. They decoy in gallant style, and when fired at they often merely flutter upwards for a few feet, then alight again, as if they were most anxious to renew the acquaintance of their wooden images. They even wheel about while hastening away on hearing their own peculiar mewing call, and give the fowler another opportunity of lessening their numbers, especially if the decoys are in sight. They are almost as expert at diving and swimming as the canvas-backs. When wounded, they sometimes plunge under the water, and taking hold of an aquatic plant, cling to it until they die.

The greater scaup duck (*Fuligula marila*), which is known by several aliases, such as the flocking fowl, broad-bill, blue-bill, big black-head, and raft duck, is one of the most abundant species of the sea ducks, being found from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Its bill, which is as long as the head, is a light-grayish-blue in color, the unguis being blackish; the iris is red; the feet are grayish-blue, and the webs and claws black; the head, neck, and forepart of the back and breast are black; the head and neck are glossed with purple and green; the hinder part of the back, the rump, abdomen, and upper and lower tail-coverts are dusky; and the anterior part of the belly and sides are grayish-white, marked with waved lines of black. The center of the breast is white; the wings are a light-brownish-gray; and the secondaries brownish-black. It attains a length of

nineteen or twenty inches, and a weight of twenty-two ounces or more. The female, which is more brownish than black, has a white face, and is nearly as large as the male. This species has less fear of approaching the land than most of its deep-water kindred, and this enables persons to tole it with facility, for its curiosity is overwhelming. Though fond of the same food as the canvas-back and red-head, its flesh is not so good, yet it is fit to grace any table. The black-heads can be seen in vast flocks in some of the regions adjoining the Pacific Ocean; and when they are mingled with other deep-water ducks they may be readily distinguished at a distance by their low and rapid flight and close grouping. When wounded they try to escape by diving and swimming long distances under water. They are prompt in coming to decoys, and as prompt in leaving, if their confidence has been imposed upon. They do not answer their whirring call well, so it is useless to try it except when they are passing by the "stools," but it may then attract their attention even if it is only rudely imitated.

The lesser scaup duck (*F. affinis*), is a small edition of the preceding, the habits of both being almost exactly alike, except that the latter goes further south in its winter wanderings. It breeds in vast numbers near the streams, lakes, and sloughs of the Northwest, and accompanies its larger kindred all over the country.

The ring-neck, or tufted duck (*F. collaris*), which derives its name from the ring of orange-brown on the neck, is common in several of the Western and Southwestern States, but it is not pursued as actively as the preceding species, its flesh not being deemed equal to theirs. It flies rapidly, clusters closely, dives and swims well, and is rather tenacious of life. It does not decoy as well as the majority of its congeners, and its voice is difficult of imitation. It is rather shy, yet it may be readily shot from covert while it is feeding in the stubble fields or in

the reeds near lakes and rivers. Its flesh is excellent, yet not more than a dollar a dozen can be obtained for it in the markets of the West, although each weighs considerably over a pound. It may be recognized by its blackish bill, which has two bands of pale-blue; its yellow iris, reddish collar, and greenish-black head. The body is blackish, except the breast and sides, which are grayish-white, waved with grayish-brown; the tail is of the latter hue; the legs are grayish-blue; and the webs are brownish-black. The female closely resembles the female of the blue-bill, but has not her white face. She has a length of sixteen inches, being two inches less than the male.

The whistler, golden-eye, or garrot (*Bucephala clangula*), which derives its first name from the fact that its wings produce a loud whistling noise when in motion, is common throughout the country, but does not congregate in such large flocks as the majority of the other species. Its flesh is palatable, yet few persons crave after it while better can be obtained with little trouble. The head of the male is puffy and of a rich green hue; there is a white spot in front of the eye; the lower neck, abdomen, sides, and wing-coverts are white; and the remainder of the body is blackish. The bill is black, except the tip, which is paler, it is shorter than the head, and is high at the base. The female has a brown head and gray sides and breast, and is two inches shorter than the male, being about sixteen inches long. This species does not decoy well to calls or stools, but some are often shot from blinds.

The buffle head (*Bucephala albeola*), which rejoices in more names than a royal baby, is known as the butter-ball, dipper, salt-water teal, and devil diver. Although quite palatable, it is not pursued much, even when it alights to decoys, owing to its small size and rather coarse flesh. It is very common, and being exempt from the danger which threatens its more edible kindred, is

less timid than they are. Its food is mainly composed of animal matter, which is always abundant in its favorite haunts, hence it is rare to find one in poor condition. It swims rapidly, dives well, can stay under water for a comparatively long time, is very quick in flight, and when alighting on the water it comes down with such a rush that it scatters showers of spray in every direction. It does not circle to the windward before settling as other ducks do; and it is very fond of uttering its short, guttural notes, which are so expressive of contentment. It is not so easily decoyed or brought to land as some of its kindred, as it is exceedingly cautious. It is one of the most maritime of its sub-family, and also one of the most beautiful, especially the male. The bill of the latter is as long as the head; is deep rather than broad at the base; and is a light grayish-blue in color, the unguis being blackish. The iris is yellowish; the feet are grayish-blue, and the webs and claws black. The head is puffy; the neck and the forepart of the back and breast are black; and the back of the head displays brilliant iridescence, the result of the harmonious combinations of its green, golden, and purplish feathers. The back, scapulars, anterior part of the abdomen, and sides are grayish-white, waved with black; the middle of the breast is white; and the wings are brownish-gray. The tail is short, rounded, and composed of fourteen feathers. It differs from the golden-eye in being without the loral patch of white; and the female is blackish in color. The males vary much in size, but their average length may be placed at sixteen and a half inches, and their weight at twenty-one ounces.

The ruddy duck (*Erismatura rubida*), when in full plumage, is brownish-red about the head and neck, except the chin and the sides of the head, which are white, and the nape and crown, which are black. The under parts are white and pale-gray. This species, which is very abundant all over the Continent, may be readily recog-

nized by its hue and bill, the latter being broad and flat, and having an overhanging nail. An adult male has a length of fifteen inches. The female, which is not so large, is of a brownish hue above; the top of the head is brown, and the under tail-coverts are white.

The harlequin duck (*Histrionicus torquatus*), is only sparingly found in the Rocky Mountain region, but it is common in Canada, especially about Labrador and Newfoundland, where the male is known as "lord," and the female as "lady." This beautiful creature has a small bill that tapers rapidly to the tip. The male is plumbeous in hue; the posterior part of the body is chestnut; the sides of the head are of the same color; a black stripe on the crown and tail is quite prominent; and the jugular collar is white. The female has a white patch in front of and behind the eye, and she is paler beneath than the male. The length of the latter is about sixteen inches, and the weight from fourteen to twenty ounces. This species is very expert in diving, and teams have the habit of dropping into the water, as if all were dead, after they have been fired at, only to take wing again in a few moments. They certainly deserve their local name, for no harlequins that ever appeared in pantomime are more dexterous at appearing and disappearing suddenly than they are.

The long-tailed duck (*Harelda glacialis*), which is also known as the hound, old wife, and south-southerly, is very common on the coasts of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The tail, from which it derives its popular name, is composed of fourteen narrow, pointed feathers, those in the middle being often equal to the wing in length, especially in the male. The latter is grayish about the sides of the head in summer, but in winter the whole head, neck, and anterior parts of the body are white, except a dark patch on the neck. The body-color varies according to the season, but the species may be

readily recognized by having no white on the wings, and having the nail occupy the whole tip of the short bill. The female is grayish in hue. An adult varies in length from fourteen to nineteen or more inches. The male is known in some places as "old Injun," and the female as "old squaw." Both are clamorous callers, and exceedingly noisy, though their tones are rather melodious. Although shot in large numbers from boats, their flesh is almost uneatable, owing to its dry and fishy flavor. Having a a rapid and irregular mode of flight, they are rather difficult to hit, especially in windy weather. The Indians eat them greedily when they have an opportunity, so that they are not wholly useless to man.

Steller's eider duck (*Somateria stellerii*), which is confined to the Northwest coast, has a black collar, a black chin-patch and eye-ring, and a general reddish-brown hue, which is darkest below. It has a length of about eighteen inches, and a proportionate weight. It is little sought for even by the littoral Indians of British Columbia, owing to the character of its flesh.

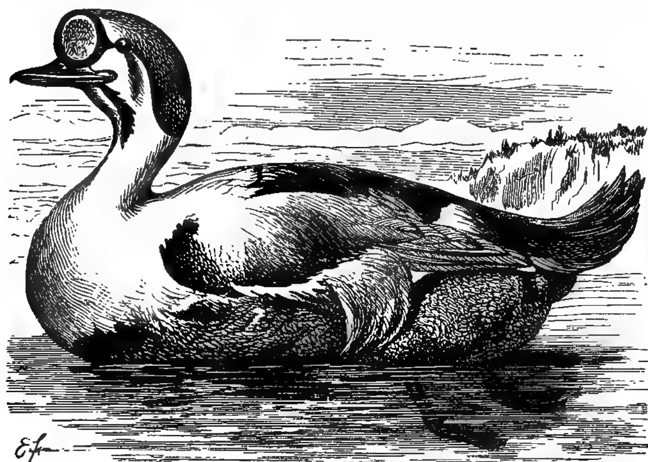
The spectacled eider (*S. fischerii*) is blackish; the throat, neck, scapulars and wing-coverts being white. This is a common resident of the waters of the Northern Pacific Ocean, being, according to the naval authorities, abundant off the coast of British America and Alaska.

The eider, or sea duck (*S. mollissima*), is common on the Atlantic Coast from Labrador to New England.

A variety known as var. *V-nigra*, from having a V-shaped black patch on the chin, is found on the shores of the Pacific. The male eider is of a whitish hue in the spring, except the breast, the lower back, the tail, and a patch on the crown of the head, which are black. The female is a reddish-brown, and the male is of the same color at certain seasons, so that they can only be distinguished apart by their size, the latter being about two feet in length.

The king eider (*S. spectabilis*) has a general blackish color in spring, and a forked patch of the same hue, on the chin, while the neck, anterior portion of the body, and interscapulars of wings are white, the crown and nape being cinerous. This species is found as far west as the great lakes, where it attains a length of about two feet.

The black scoter (*Œdemia americana*) is generally black. The male has a peculiarly swollen, orange-colored



KING EIDER DUCK.

bill, which is shorter than the head, and a tail of sixteen feathers. The female, which has not the turgid mandible of the other, is sooty-brown above, and grayish beneath. The length of an adult male is about two feet. The western range of this species rarely goes beyond the Mississippi River.

The white-winged coot (*Œdemia fusca*), which is also known as the bell-tongued coot, white-winged surf duck, and the velvet scoter, is more abundant than the preceding, but its geographical range is about the same. The male, which is black, has a short black

bill that is tipped with orange. The wings have a patch of white; the iris is white, and there is a spot under the eye. The female is sooty-black, and has the white patches on the wing.

The surf duck, or sea coot (*Œdemia perspicillata*), is common on the Atlantic Coast, its place on the Pacific being occupied by the Trowbridge variety, which differs from it a little in markings. Both have a bill which is much swollen at the sides, as well as at the base of the upper mandible. This bill is orange-red in color, and white at the sides, except where it is broken by a black circular spot at the base below. The male is black, but has a white patch on the forehead and the top of the head. The female is darkish-brown, and has white patches before and behind the eye. Large numbers of these birds are shot from boats by some sportsmen on the Atlantic Coast, when they commence their southern migrations in autumn. They arrive from the north in flocks which might be estimated at thousands, and from that time forth they are lawful prey to all who wish to waste ammunition on them, for their flesh is neither tender nor palatable.

The mergansers, which are distinguished from all their kindred by having a round, toothed-bill, instead of a flat one, are very common all over the Continent.

The goosander, or fish duck (*Mergus merganser*), has a green, puffy head; the back and wings are black and white, and the under parts are salmon-colored. The upper parts of the female are gray, mixed with some white; the neck and head are reddish-brown, and she has a small crest.

The sheldrake, or red-breasted merganser (*M. serrator*), approaches the preceding in general color, but the breast is reddish, streaked with black; the sides are undulated with black; the wings are crossed by two black bars, and have a whitish mark in front of them. Both sexes have a slight crest, and are smaller than the goosanders.

The hooded merganser, or swanbill diver (*Mergus cucullatus*), which ranges all over the Continent, is about eighteen inches in length. The male has a thick crest; is blackish in hue above; the under parts, the speculum, center of crest, and the stripes on the tertials are white; the sides are chestnut, and barred with black. The head and neck of the female are brown; the chin is whitish; the wing tip is decorated with white; and the back and sides are dark-brown. The mergansers being unfit for the table, owing to the character of their food, which is solely composed of animal matter, principally fish, they are not pursued to any extent, yet they are shot occasionally by sportsmen in search of other game. Their feathers bring a good price, and this induces some pioneers to kill them at every opportunity.

Of the eiders, the most prized are the sea duck and king duck, as their feathers are so elastic that the down taken from a nest may be squeezed in the hand, and when the hand is re-opened it will regain its original bulk. This down, which is plucked from her own breast by the female, is a dark-slate color, and so highly prized that it meets a ready sale in all civilized countries. The great breeding grounds of these ducks are in the far north, and there they are regularly pursued by the Indians and pioneers who know the value of their plumage. Their nests are despoiled both for the sake of the down and the eggs, as the latter are considered delicacies. The eggs, which number from three to five, and are of a beautiful olive-green color, are about three inches long, very smooth, and large in circumference. The young are pretty creatures, good divers and swimmers from the moment of their birth, and readily susceptible to domestication.

Certain kinds of sea ducks are shot from boats anchored in some bay or creek, as they fly past overhead. A fleet of thirty or forty of these boats are sometimes engaged in this business at a time on Long Island Sound, and

when their occupants are busily at work with their weapons, it requires no great stretch of the imagination to compare them to miniature war ships engaged in battle. The ducks are picked up as fast as they are shot, unless the firing is so brisk that it would be a waste of time to go after single birds. Some of the ducks fly a quarter of a mile perhaps, after being hard hit, and then fall lifeless; hence many escape the bag of the sportsman. Others, when wounded, dive to the bottom of the bay, and taking hold of some weeds with their bills, cling to them until they are dead. These generally come to the surface when the warmth has left the body, as the muscles then relax their hold.

Old squaws, or musical ducks as they are generally called, on account of their melodious cry, which may be expressed by the notes E. G. C. E. on the treble cleff of a piano, are considered excellent shooting, as they fly fast and are hard to kill. The fishermen say that these birds are regular members of a duck opera troupe; that their song is "He's got no gun," and that they never vary it. Their four notes might certainly express this idea, for they are unusually noisy and bold when they see a person passing them on shore without that deadly weapon in his hands; whereas the sight of it causes them to hasten away immediately if they have been shot at much. Talk of instinct in birds! If they do not reason on cause and effect after a few lessons in the science of gunnery, then I make a mistake. Shooting sea ducks, except for their feathers, is not very profitable, as their flesh has so fishy a taste as to be almost uneatable. Some persons, however, manage to eat them and apparently to enjoy them. Among the methods recommended for making them palatable, one is to put an onion or two inside each bird, then place it over the fire in a pot of cold water, until the water is nearly ready to boil. It should then be taken out and roasted as ordinary ducks are. If

treated in this manner it is said to equal the fresh water species in flavor. Another is, to open the bird, remove the inside fat, and soak the body a few hours in water before roasting it. A well known cook says that wild-fowl ought to be put into boiling water for a few minutes in order to loosen the skin, which must be pulled off to make them tender. They should then be thoroughly washed inside, and wiped outside with a dry cloth. An onion, and a piece of salt butter equal to it in bulk, are next placed inside each bird; a piece of buttered paper or a slice of bacon is tied over the breast; and while it is roasting it is basted freely with melted butter. The bacon or paper ought to be removed a few minutes before the bird is done; it should then be sprinkled freely with salt, and garnished with thin slices of bacon rolled up.

The pleasantest day with ducks that I can recall was one spent on the Indian River, in Florida, where a party of us were passing a portion of the winter. We left our headquarters, which were situated in the ramshackle cabin of a Cracker, on a delightful morning in December, and pulled down the river, which gleamed like molten silver under the bright rays of the southern moon. After rowing about two miles, our Cracker guide, who was accompanied by two Chesapeake Bay dogs, planted several wooden decoys in front of a well-formed blind, and then rowed up and down a contiguous creek to see if any ducks were near. On his return he reported that no birds were within a mile of us, so we crept into the blind and waited patiently for the approach of the dawn and ducks. When the faintest indication of daylight appeared, two of us rowed the boat up a creek, in order to conceal it in the shrubbery, and prevent its being seen by the keen-eyed *canards*. While pulling heedlessly onward, we were startled by a tremendous churning and splashing in the water, and on turning round to see

what caused it, we were surprised to find ourselves almost in the midst of a huge bed of ducks, which must have numbered several thousand. This unexpected meeting stupefied us for a moment or two, as we did not anticipate such good fortune, but even if we had known the ducks were there I doubt if we could have seen them, as the moon had sunk behind the forest, so that the stream, which was as tranquil as a mill-pond, gave back none of its reflections.

On recovering our wits we seized our guns and fired four barrels into the mass of feathers that whirled above us in the air, and a moment later we could hear the splashes of several ducks as they struck the water, and the frightened squawks of the crippled as they fluttered helplessly down the river. We set about picking up our birds at once, and in this we were aided considerably by one of the retrievers that had remained in the boat, seemingly asleep, and which went to work without even being asked to do so. Through his exertions and our own, we managed to secure seven dead ducks and two cripples, but these, evidently, were not all we had brought down, judging by the splashes in the river, and the opportunity we had for making a large bag. Having concealed the boat, we returned to the blind with our trophies, and received the congratulation of our friends for bringing them such early indications of good luck. The guide said he "reckned" we should have "piles of shootin'," and he also "reckned" the wind would freshen about sunrise, and that the ducks would come booming towards us; but he wasn't "sartain sure" of the wind, as "it mought, and then it moughtn't freshen afore noon, or maybe evenin'." His prophesying was soon cut short by a large dark cloud, from which emanated a loud whistling sound, that passed overhead at a high altitude, but when it cleared the blind it sunk rapidly downward until it struck the water, not three hundred yards from our position.

"Ducks by the million, by Jiminy," exclaimed the guide. "I tell you, gemmen, you'll have piles of shootin' at day-break."

That was the very thing we were waiting for most impatiently, so when the dull, gray light began to steal across the eastern horizon, our spirits went up wonderfully, and we discoursed enthusiastically about the balmy air, and the luxuriance and color of the tropical scenery that surrounded us.

As the gray merged into a steel-blue, and the blue into the roseate tints that indicated the approach of the god of day, the wind freshened and blew a fairly fast gale from the ocean.

"I tell you, gemmen," said the Cracker, "you'll have piles of shootin' soon, as this wind, that I told you mought and moughtn't come, will send the ducks up the river a-kiting, and we can jest lay into 'em like a thousand of bricks."

His prophesy again proved to be correct, for, in a few minutes, the weak squawks of a team of approaching baldpates were heard, and a little later the ducks came sailing down towards the decoys. Just as they were momentarily hovering, previous to settling, the contents of ten barrels were poured into their midst, and twenty-seven of them tumbled headlong into the stream and squawked or floundered about in the agonies of death. The remainder turned, on seeing this catastrophe, and, with many a scream, winged their flight to the silent forest that stretched for miles beyond us.

The enthusiast of the party became ecstatic at our early good fortune, and indulged in the wildest gambols and half a dozen impromptu jigs, which he had invented on the spur of the moment. So vehement was he in this display of terpsichorean agility, that one of his comrades hinted that he had formerly been an Irish dancing master; but this cynical inuendo not having the desired effect, an-

other said that as soon as men became crazy at their success in duck-shooting it was customary to anchor them in the stream until their ardor cooled, or they became sane once more; but even this implied threat made no impression on him, and all he could say was:

"I don't care a hang what you do to me; I must have bagged a dozen of those ducks myself, if I didn't kill every one of them."

As this proved that he was hopelessly duck crazy, further hints were deemed to be unavailing, and he was left to the tender mercies of time and more flocks to restore him to his ordinary senses. Before he had concluded all his terpsichorean evolutions, the guide, who seemed to be staring at the clouds, sung out:

"Mark ducks, gemmen; mark river; here they come in piles."

On looking, sure enough they were in "piles," for thousands of them were rushing up the river.

The first team was composed of black ducks, and we expected to make a haul among them, but just as we thought they would sink to our decoys they wheeled about and fled back as if they had been suddenly imbued with the idea that their wooden images were gross frauds and dangerous acquaintances. The teams behind them did not display such a suspicious nature, however, for they swept down to our decoys in the most familiar manner, but before many of them could settle, the ten barrels again blazed forth almost simultaneously, and their shower of lead must have brought down thirty or forty mallards and canvas-backs. Several were only wounded, and as they tried to flutter away we had an opportunity of trying our accuracy at shooting single birds. Before the last of them was killed, another mass of feathers, comprising ducks of several species, came sweeping towards us, producing a noise like the whistling roar of an approaching whirlwind, and as they came fluttering and

splashing about our decoys we poured a heavy volley into the densest part, and a score or two more gave their lives as a forfeit for their credulous natures.

When the remainder had fled we launched our boat and commenced picking up the slain, while the dogs devoted all their attention to securing the wounded, and this they did in the most admirable manner, for they often passed birds which were splashing wildly in their death struggles, and went after those that were making efforts to escape. The ducks would dive on seeing the dogs approaching, but the latter were evidently used to this stratagem, for they rose, as it were, in the water, and turned slowly in a circle, while they carefully scanned the surface, and when a bird came up they hastened towards it and captured it or sent it down again. The chase continued in this manner until nearly all the cripples were secured, for the retrievers followed a duck until it died on the bottom through suffocation, or it was shot by a member of the party. These dogs rushed into the water without any orders on seeing a duck fall, but if a shot was unsuccessful they remained as still as if they were made of cast iron, and hardly blinked their feelings of disappointment. We had good shooting at this point until ten A. M., but the ducks ceased "trading" after that, and settled in vast beds beyond gun range, or sought safety in the surrounding morasses. We managed to secure a few canvas-backs and red-heads by toling them towards the shore with a gaily-colored handkerchief which was tied to a stick and waved slowly over the blind, but the greater number were too cautious to approach within gun shot. Our guide told us that he had frequently brought them near the land by making one of his retriever puppies gambol along the shore, and related several instances in which he had been unusually successful with this trick where all other means of obtaining a shot had failed. Having seen this ruse performed more than

dog is well-broken, keeps silent, and is strongly colored, so that it may be seen some distance away.

It is nothing unusual for an ordinary shot to kill from fifty to a hundred ducks in a day by flight shooting alone in some parts of the West and Southwest, and, if heavy duck guns are used, perhaps double that number. Instances are also known where, owing to the wildness of the birds, one was not bagged in a day, although the sky was dotted with large "trading" teams, as they took care to keep away from the land. That some ducks have strong vital power is evident from the fact that a party of five men failed to kill one which they fired at simultaneously, in a lake in Minnesota. They brought the bird down, but it had scarcely touched the water ere it began to swim away. This raised such a howl of indignation among the wild-fowlers that one of them jumped into a skiff, and swore he would have that bird, as he did not want it reported that five of them could not kill a consumptive duck. He paddled after the fugitive, and on approaching it lifted the paddle to hit it, but the duck was under before the weapon touched the water. This elicited roars of laughter and a volume of suggestions. One told him to jump out of the boat and kick the durned duck to death; another wanted him to dive after it; a third suggested that he throw salt on its tail, and a fourth, to put pepper in its nose and let it sneeze its head off. Before either of these suggestions could be carried out, the duck, skiff, and fowler disappeared like lead. This sudden disappearance caused all to indulge in speculation as to the cause of it, but while each had his own idea, the general impression (for this occasion only) was, that he had committed suicide through chagrin at being outwitted by a consumptive duck, or that the duck had turned on him and dragged himself and the skiff under. The party then started to search for him, but being unable to

find any trace of him along the shore, they went to a farm house a few yards from the lake, and on entering that, saw a bearded individual arrayed in an old slouch hat and a woman's calico dress sitting near the fire.

"Where is the duck, Jem?" asked one, as he stared hard at him.

"Durn the duck," said the metamorphosed Jem.

"Lost?"

"I cal'ate she is. I ain't seen her since she went down the last time."

"She must 'a been one o' those enchanted ducks you read about," exclaimed another.

"How so?" asked a third.

"Why, don't you see she has turned Jem into an old woman; all that's left of the Jem Smith we used to know is his old hat. He's now a reg'lar caliker-gownd. I pity his poor wife. That must have been a wicked duck to treat Jem like that."

Jem, on hearing this, jumped up and swore he would shoot the speaker, and as all pretended to be afraid of an enchanted woman, they ran from the house amid roars of laughter and hastened to town to tell of their companion's mishap. The result of that expedition was to wound a duck, to have two of the party catch cold, and to give Jem Smith a name which still clings to him, if he lives.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WOODCOCK.

Its various names—Nests and eggs—Grotesque wooers—Mode of carrying the young—Dutiful mothers—Method of transporting the young—Gourmands—Haunts—The lazy season—Cocker spaniels—Charges for a gun—Fire-hunting in the Southern States—Best month for shooting woodcock—The moulting period—Frequent cornfields in September—How to cook woodcock.

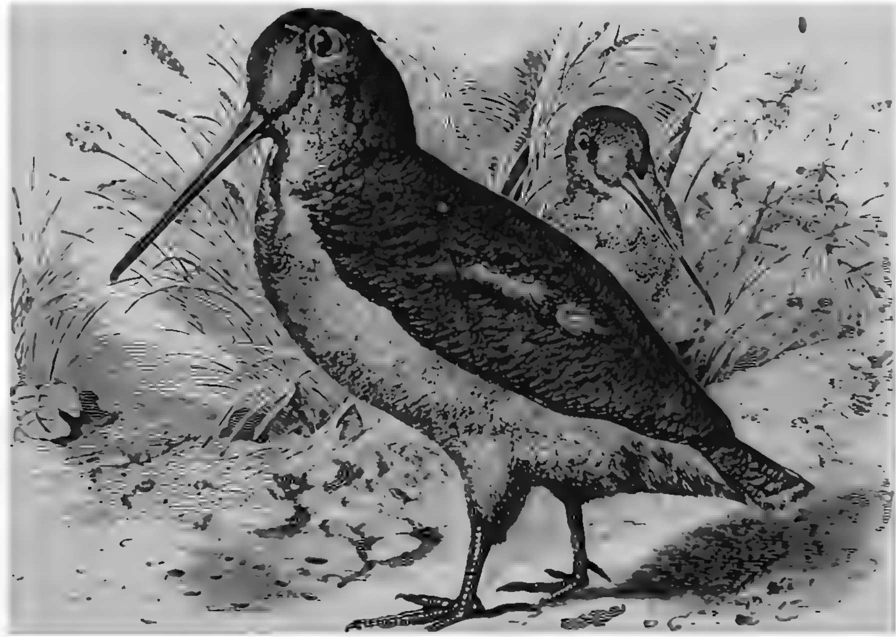
The woodcock (*Philohela minor*), which is also known as the woodsnipe and the bog-sucker, is smaller than its European congener, the adult males seldom averaging over eight ounces in weight. The upper portions of the woodcock are gray, brown, black, and russet, and the lower reddish-brown. The mating season opens in April, soon after the birds return from the south, and reaches its climax in two or three weeks. The males are ardent and grotesque wooers, for they strut before the females with their tails spread out, and their rigid wings sweeping the ground, like so many miniature turkey cocks. After strutting for awhile, they rise spirally into the air to a height of two or three hundred feet, then drop like a rocket beside the hens, and playfully dart at them with their bills extended. They are very active with voice and wing on moonlit nights, for they serenade the females most persistently, though their song is anything but melodious, it being a hollow, ringing sound of zisb zisb. When the hen is ready to lay, she builds a nest of grass and leaves on the ground beside a shrub, log, or tussock, and often conceals it with sedges or "brush" to protect it against enemies. She then deposits her eggs, which are generally confined to four in number, though she oc-

casionally drops five. These are white, blotched with chocolate, and very symmetrical in shape. If she sits on these the young are hatched early in May, but should they be destroyed, she lays another set; hence it is not unusual to meet chicks in August which are hardly able to fly; yet they are killed by some persons.

The mother takes the chicks to the feeding grounds as soon as they are able to travel, and works diligently in procuring them food, but should food become scarce or the ground so hard that the young cannot bore through it, she takes them, one at a time, between her thighs, and transports them to a region where it is more abundant. When she is removing them, her flight is slow, quivering, and labored, and she does not rise higher above the ground than necessity compels her. After reaching her new quarters, she seems to be very happy, and nothing gives her so much pleasure as to see the young feeding generously on juicy worms. Few mothers are more devoted to their duties than the female woodcock, for she will sometimes allow herself to be captured rather than desert her nest, and if any foe threatens to assail her chicks, she pretends to be wounded and flutters helplessly ahead of it until she has led it away from them, when she rises suddenly and hastens to some dense covert until she can rejoin her brood. A family of woodcocks generally consists of six—the two adults and four chicks. These remain together until the autumn, then separate, and though they may stay in the same coppice or swale, yet they seldom associate, but wander about singly until they commence migrating to their winter homes. Being largely nocturnal in habit, they seek for their food chiefly at night, and return to the dense brakes in which they live ere the day dawns. As they eat an enormous quantity of worms—at least their own weight every twenty-four hours—they get fat in a short time where food is abundant. Their favorite haunts are rich swampy

districts where moisture and worms are plentiful, but they carefully avoid sour meadows and thirsty lands. They are partial to the banks of streams that meander through woods, the sedge-bound bayous so common in the South, the sides of meadows at the foot of hills, and oozy beds covered with aquatic vegetation. They also frequent open woods having a rich alluvial soil, and flat lands adjacent to rivers which overflow their banks. Cool, shady, moist ground is a favorite resting place in sultry weather, especially if a hot breeze is blowing. They are often found in places the opposite of each other in character, and the arbitrary manner in which they change their residences, seemingly without any purpose, is puzzling to the sportsman, for where they are abundant one day they may be invisible the next, and *vice versa.*

Being somewhat indolent in the early part of the season and in warm weather, they often wait until a man is very close to them before flushing, but when they do flush, they rise like a rocket and skim along the tops of the trees, only to sink like a lump of lead after flying a few yards. This habit of theirs makes shooting them rather difficult, as persons have no time to take aim, and must therefore be content with snapshots. If they fly in partially open ground, a man can afford to take deliberate aim at them, but he must fire the moment he catches sight of them in cover. The best dogs for woodcock work are Cocker spaniels, as they can penetrate the thickets, owing to their small size and thick coat, and being slow, one can easily keep up with them. If they run mute, a bell can be tied to their necks, and that will inform the sportsman were they are; and should it cease jingling, it is a sign that they have come to a point. Some dogs do not at first take kindly to this sort of work, on account, it is supposed, of the disagreeable scent of the woodcock, but they get over their repugnance after a while if they are thoroughbred, though they may always dislike



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retrieving the bird. The best time for making a big bag of woodcocks is the mating period, as the males may then be readily seen against the starlit sky, when they rise to hover and to serenade the gentle sex with their hoarse song of "bisweet, bisweet, crock wauk." Very large bags are rarely made, however, owing to the scarcity of the birds, and the difficulty of getting fair shots at them. Ten couples a day is considered good work even when they are comparatively numerous, but I have heard of persons who were said to have bagged twenty couples in that time. The ordinary charge used in woodcock shooting is two and a half drachms of powder and an ounce of No. 10 or 12 shot.

Woodcocks are very numerous in Florida and Texas during the winter, being frequenters of the banks of every lagoon where food can be procured. The negroes often kill large numbers by "fire-hunting" them at night, as all they have to do is to knock them on the head with clubs. I was out with a party one night in Florida which killed five, but they were satisfied with the bag, as it was better—a very little better—than nothing.

The best month for woodcock shooting in the Middle and Western States is July, as the old and young are then in cover along the courses of streams and the bottom lands. They are supposed to go to the high grounds in the month of August while they are moulting, and to return to their regular feeding grounds at night, only to leave them again before daybreak. It is quite a common belief that they only seek for food during the night, but it is evident that they also feed in the daytime, as some have been shot as late as three P. M. with worms in their mouths, they not having had time to swallow them before being killed. They descend to the cornfields in September, and work diligently wherever the soil is soft and damp, and remain there unless they are disturbed. To make much of a bag then, a person must use a stool to

raise himself above the standing grain, and a spaniel to rout them from cover. The gun may kick a man off his perch occasionally, but that is a mere trifle compared to the sport enjoyed. Some men use step ladders when they have to shoot in thickets. These are placed at convenient points, and when the fowlers mount them, the dogs are sent in to flush the birds. If the animals are successful, Mr. Philohela Minor is greeted with many a salute as he emerges from cover, and if he is sent to grass, the "grassers" congratulate themselves in no uncertain phrases. This plan of shooting cannot, of course, be generally adopted, but it will do for special occasions.

The female is larger than the male, and weighs an ounce or two more. This makes her a special target for fowlers, but the man who would kill her in the spring or summer must be cruel or thoughtless, for her death means the loss of four or more young birds, and the rapid decimation of her family. She is the first to arrive from the South in the spring, being followed a week or fortnight later by the male. Her time of arrival varies from February to March, as it depends entirely on the condition of the weather; and her time of departure for the South, from November to December. The first flights that reach the Middle and Western States in the autumn are called "flight birds." These are distinguished from the permanent summer guests by the brighter color of the plumage on the breast, and their active habits, as they act like strangers in a place. When the birds are moulting, they keep under cover as much as possible, and seldom wander far from their places of concealment. If these are on the hillsides, the birds live mainly on the little white worms which are found on the under side of fallen leaves, and such other food as may be convenient. They turn over the leaves in a large extent of country in twenty-four hours, as they work rapidly each morning and evening, in order to be under cover when the sun ap-

pears above the horizon. Their presence in a region may therefore be known by the position of the leaves or the borings in the ground.

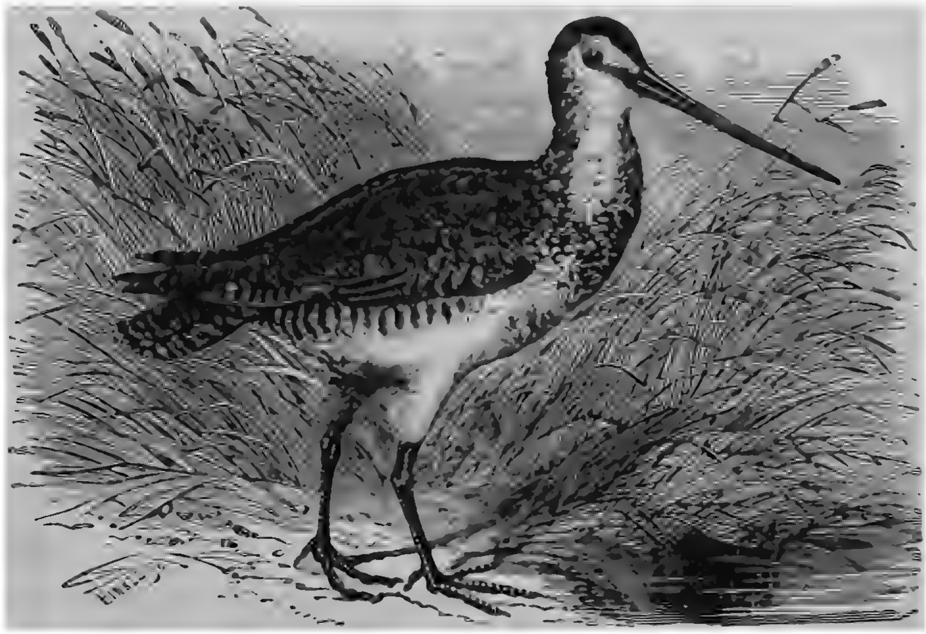
Ardent lovers of woodcock shooting think no bird affords such sport as their favorite, as luck and uncertainty enter into it to a large extent. This is true, for a man may find dozens in a region one day and not a single bird the next, owing to their erratic migrations. I will close this chapter by giving a recipe for cooking woodcock. The bird should first be allowed to get "high," but not too much so, and then be thoroughly cleansed. Leave on the head, as it is a delicious morsel, cover the breast with sweet lard, and then roast in a covered pan containing a lump of salt butter.

CHAPTER XIV.

SNIPE.

Abundance in the West and South—Lie well to dogs in fine weather—Migrations—Haunts and habits of Wilson's snipe—Side shots—Large bags—Best time to shoot at a snipe.

Snipe are exceedingly abundant in the West in spring and autumn, and in the Southwest in winter, being most numerous in the tier of States bordering the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, the Gulf Stream, and the Pacific Ocean. It is nothing unusual for a man to bag from fifty to seventy couples a day in some of these regions, for they become so tame and fat in places where food is abundant and enemies are scarce, that they pay little or no attention to a person, and fly so close to him when they rise that he may bag the majority. I have heard of a sportsman who killed sixty without making a miss, and of another who grassed ninety-one in a hundred shots. This statement may give an idea of their numbers and fearlessness when they are not constantly assailed by storms of leaden hail. Snipe lie well to dogs in fine weather, and are sometimes so lazy that they cannot be flushed until they are almost kicked out of their places of concealment. They are very wild in blustry weather, and flush long before a person is within shooting distance. Some persons prefer to shoot without a dog in such weather, as they say the chances of getting shots are better. They always beat down wind, as the birds must rise against the wind to get on the wing, owing to the length and closeness of the under alar feathers. This forces them to fly to the right or left of the sportsman,



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and thus present easier shots than if they went straight away in their usual zigzag course.

They commence migrating southward from the extreme north about the month of September or October, and make several stoppages on the way, resting wherever food is abundant. Their favorite time for travelling is on murky, drizzling days. If a single bird is flushed on such days, its sharp call is answered by every snipe in the field, and all rise together, dart about in the air, and give vent to their feelings in many cries of "scaipe." The snipe has the habit of hovering, and of producing a noise with its wings as it descends, which is so characteristic of the woodcock and some of the grouse. The hovering is practised in hazy weather during the spring, and frequently continued all day, half a dozen perhaps, being engaged in it at the same time. Large numbers are destroyed at this period by market-hunters, as the birds are fat and lazy, especially if the season is warm and clear. They do not go South in the autumn until the frost has made the ground so hard that their long, soft bills cannot penetrate it when they are searching for the juicy worms.

The *Gallinago wilsonii*, which is also known as the English, the American, and the jack snipe, is a true representative of its family, and has all the cunning and caution which has given its European namesake the high character it bears among sportsmen. This species returns from its winter quarters in the South about April, and, while large numbers breed in the United States, the majority go further north to raise their families. The male is very domestic in his habits, for, if he is not engaged in cheering his spouse by hovering and drumming over her nest, he is busily at work providing her with food. He resorts to the usual "tricks of his trade," to lead foes away from the young, but if he is unsuccessful, he sounds a note of alarm, and the chicks, on hearing it, seek safety in a convenient tussock until the threatened danger has

passed. Both parents are very careful of their brood, and work diligently in providing them food. The young are in prime condition about November, and so well able to take care of themselves that the fowler has to use all his art to bag them. Many persons think that snipe are difficult to kill, but this is only true to a certain extent, for if one will walk down wind, and not shoot rapidly, but give the birds a start of twenty or thirty yards before firing—if they rise within ten yards or so—he will find that his bag at the end of the day will be much larger than if he had taken snap shots, and that he may score with both barrels, thus giving himself double snipes and a duplicate pleasure. The cause of this is readily apparent. When they fly about twenty or thirty yards, they settle into a straight course, whereas they dart hither and thither in the most eccentric manner previous to going that distance. Side shots are better and surer than the straight, especially if one is beating to the leeward. If a person is shooting over dogs, he cannot well beat down wind, as the animals must work to the windward or across wind, if they are to be of much use besides acting as retrievers. When the dogs point, it is advisable to get to their windward before flushing the bird, as the chances of grassing it are greater. Setters are better for this work than pointers. If snipe are abundant, large bags can be made in favorable weather, for it is nothing unusual for a market-hunter to average fifty couples a a day for a week or two, and sometimes more; but, should the weather be unpropitious, few birds are harder to kill, on account of their erratic habits, capricious character, and manner of soaring high and flushing at long distances. When they first arrive from the South they are wild and unsteady, and keep constantly changing their haunts, as if no place suited them. They sometimes travel in wisps numbering twenty or more, then decrease to "walks" of four or five. It is little use trying to pur-

sue them in murky, rainy, or blustry weather, as they will not allow man or dog very near them, for they are both sharp of vision and hearing. The best days for shooting them are those which are soft, hazy, and sunny, when the air is fanned by a gentle, southerly breeze. They lie well to dogs at such times, and, when flushed, may not fly more than a few yards before settling again. Any tyro can grass them then, if he will only permit them to get some distance away before firing, in order to let the shot spread, and cover them deliberately before the trigger is pulled. If they are abundant, one can dispense with a dog, as they lie well before a man, but if they are not, a staunch, steady setter that will keep its point under all circumstances, until the birds are flushed, and obey the motions of the hand, is necessary to successful shooting. The animal must be prompt in coming to heel when ordered, and remain there until set to work again. The advantage of this obedience is, that a flushed bird will often lie to a man after alighting when it would not to a dog, and will therefore afford an opportunity of bagging it, as it rarely moves more than a few feet from where it was marked down.

Some sportsmen say that the best time to shoot at a snipe is when it rises, and poises for a moment before darting away, while others think it should not be fired at until it reaches a distance of twenty or thirty yards from the gun, when it starts off in a direct course. Side-shots are the surest, but, as the bird flies quickly, the gun should be pointed a foot ahead of it at twenty or twenty-five yards, and from two to three feet at from forty to fifty yards. Snipe are not near so wild and unsteady in the autumn as in the spring, for the reason, perhaps, that they are over their family troubles for the year, and have few foes to fear except man, for their haunts are usually safe from the incursions of the small predaceous animals.

CHAPTER XV.

BAY BIRDS.

Their haunts and habits.—Methods of shooting them.

The greater number of the shore birds of the Continent, such as plovers, godwits, willets, yellow-legs, curlews, and sandpipers, are called Bay Birds by the majority of sportsmen, owing to their fondness for the sea shore and the regions adjoining water. These various species are placed in the order *Limicolæ*, which has numerous representatives. Birds belonging to it have a globose head, which slopes abruptly to the base of the bill; the bill is weak, flexible, somewhat soft-skinned, and therefore sensitive and blunt at the tip, without hard, cutting edges; the nostrils are like a slit, never feathered, and are surrounded by a soft skin; the tibia is more or less naked; the legs are elongated; and the hind toe is free and elevated, but is often wanting.

The family *Charadriidæ*, to which plovers belong, may be distinguished from the others by having the bill shorter than the head, the broad, soft base separated by a constriction from the hard tip, the neck short, the tarsus reticulate, and only three toes, except in the *squatarola*. All species of plover have the peculiar habit, after alighting on the ground, during the breeding season, of standing with legs half bent and drooping wings, and trembling as if they had a severe fit of the ague. They act as if they were on their last legs, and utter a singular sound, which is more of a plaint than a song of joy, at becoming the parents of promising families.

The black-bellied plover, bull-head, or ox-eye (*Squatarola helvetica*), is one of the commonest of the family. The face and under parts are black; the superior parts are variegated with black, white, and cinerous; and the tail is barred with black and white. This species varies so much in plumage at different seasons that it is frequently mistaken for its close companion, the whistling plover, yet both can readily be distinguished apart. The golden plover, which is also known as the bull-head, frost-bird, and whistling plover (*Charadrius fulvus*, var. *virginicus*), is smaller than the preceding, but its flesh is equally as good. It is scattered throughout the country, and is found feeding on prairies and sand bars in immense flocks during the autumn. Its back is speckled; the under parts are black during the breeding season, and dotted with the bright yellow spots from which it derives the name of golden plover; the forehead, rump, and upper tail-coverts are white; it has a whitish line over the eye; and the tail is grayish-brown, with white or ashy bars. The female is rather grayish. This bird has received the name of prairie pigeon from some of the western farmers, owing to the vast flocks that sweep over the plains in the spring and autumn, and devour the grasshoppers which sometimes prove a scourge to growing crops. It winters on the grassy ranges of the South, and leaves for the North in the early part of April, reaching such regions as Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Manitoba about the tenth. It is fond of frequenting burnt prairies, plowed fields, and bare pastures, being so partial to the latter that it will return to them even after it is driven away by fowlers. It is found in sheep pastures in large numbers, as sheep are such close feeders that they leave but little grass to cover the earth. It is sure to be a resident of fields that are being plowed, as it often follows the plow to pick up the worms, which it knows by experience are brought to the surface. As it flies close to the ground

when moving in flocks, a person can bag a good many by taking a stand at some point on their line of flight, or by lying down on the ground, provided his clothes are of a neutral hue. It is nothing uncommon for a man to kill ten or eleven with both barrels, especially if they present a chance for side shots. If they are flying at a high altitude, the sportsman may be able to score with the first barrel, but he will often find it difficult to use the second, as they descend with such a rush that one might imagine the entire flock had been killed. If flocks are not moving in one direction, it is little or no use trying to take a stand on their line of flight, so the only ready resource left is to stalk them from a carriage or a wagon. The horse should be driven rapidly towards them, as if one intended to pass them, and when he is hauled up, care should be taken that he is within gun range of them. As the birds always rise when the horse stops, the person who is prompt with his weapon should be able to count with both barrels and make a large score. If a man stalks them afoot, he should run parallel to the flocks, as if he were hastening away from them, and, on getting within distance, wheel suddenly and fire. He must be good in wind and steady in nerve to make a heavy bag by this method, as it is exceedingly trying on the muscles.

Should any of a passing flock be killed or wounded, the survivors often circle round them, and thus offer capital opportunities for making side shots. It is not unusual for a man to kill twenty or thirty at a time in this manner, as the creatures seem to take no notice of the leaden hail that is decimating them. Instances are known in which persons have killed two and three hundred in a day by wing shooting alone, owing to this habit of the birds, for they sweep round and round several times, and within a few feet of their dead or crippled kindred. The large flocks break up into small wings, numbering from three to

twelve, about the last of April. These may be found on the bare pastures early in the morning, but they resort to arable fields about eight or nine o'clock to feast on the worms which they prize so much. They fly very rapidly at this time, so that they make excellent targets on which to practice wing-shooting. They re-unite in dense masses after the breeding season is over, and keep together until the cold weather sets in, when they begin their southern migration. They are fond of frequenting the sand bars of rivers in the evening during the autumn months to sand themselves and quench their thirst, and so anxious are they to reach these places as soon as possible, that they do not take even the most ordinary precautions against foes.

The killdeer plover (*Ægialitis vociferus*), which derives its name from its sharp, peculiar note, is found all over the Continent, but is most abundant in the Western States. It may be recognized by its white forehead, black bands on neck and breast, black bar on crown, black bill, tawny rump, white tail with orange-brown through part of it, and from one to three black bars, white secondaries, and grayish legs. It associates with its congeners, and with curlews, tatlers, sanderlings, and other bay birds. Wilson's plover (*Ægialitis wilsonius*), which is a sea-shore species, is of a pale ash-brown color, and has a black bar on the crown, a broad band across the throat, a dark bill, and flesh-colored legs. The ring neck, or semi-palmated plover (*Ægialitis semipalmatus*), is about one-third the size of the killdeer, which it closely resembles in color, but it has the bright orange eyelid which is wanting in the latter, and also in Wilson's plover. This species is scattered over the country, but its favorite resorts are muddy flats or sandy shores, over which it runs in small groups, while searching for food. It is rather tame, for it only runs a few yards after being alarmed ere it comes

to a standstill, and remains perfectly quiet for some time.

The piping plover (*Ægialitis melodus*), is found in the Eastern and Middle States; the snowy plover (*Ægialitis cantiana*) is a resident of the regions beyond the Rocky Mountains; the surf bird of the Pacific Coast, *Aphriza virgata,* which seems to be the connecting link between plovers and oyster-catchers, seldom leaves the vicinity of the ocean; and the mountain plover (*Eudromias montanus*), which seems to have no partiality for water, wanders from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean.

Next to the plovers comes the oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus palliatus*), which is found on the shores of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, though not in large numbers. This is black or brown above; the under parts below the breast are white; the bill is red or orange, somewhat compressed, and knife-like; the rump is white; a ring of the same hue encircles the eye; and the legs are flesh-color. The turnstone (*Strepsilas interpres*), which receives its name from its habit of turning over stones and pebbles with its bill when searching for food, is a resident of the shores of both oceans. It has a curious piebald appearance, as it displays white, black, brown, and chestnut-red colors, but the latter is wanting in winter. The American avocet, or blue stocking (*Recurvirostra americana*), has exceedingly long blue legs; a long, slender, and black bill with an upward curve; and red eyes. Its general color is white, but the back and wings show a good deal of black, and the neck and head are cinnamon-brown. The latter parts are of an ashy hue in the young.

The stilt, or long shanks (*Himantopus nigricollis*), has carmine legs, a black bill, and is glossy-black above; the side of the head and neck, the rump, and the under parts are white. This is very common on the Southern coast during the winter, but it is not shot much, not being highly prized as an addition to the table. The phala-

ropes are very abundant around the pools, sloughs, and meadows of the West, but while some breed there, others go north, and are only found in the United States during their migrations. One of the commonest is Wilson's phalarope (*Steganopus wilsonii*), whose slender, awl-shaped bill enables a person to readily distinguish it from other bay birds. The upper parts are of an ashy hue; the under parts are white; and a black stripe extends downward from the eye to the neck. The Northern phalarope (*Lobipes hyperbreos*) is only found in the United States during its migrations. Its hue is grayish-black above, varied with tawny on the back; the under parts are white; the sides of the head and neck are marked with a broad chestnut stripe; and the upper tail-coverts are white. The red phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) is an active, graceful, finely formed bird. Its lobed feet enables it to travel readily in the water; hence it is frequently found some distance from land. It is only a migratory visitor to the United States. The upper parts are tawny and cinerous, and the lower purplish-chestnut, but white in the young.

The dowitcher, brownback, gray snipe, or red-breasted snipe (*Macrorhamphus griseus*), is gray above and on the breast in winter, and white on the abdomen, but, in summer, the upper parts are brownish-black, variegated with light-brown, and the under portions are brownish-red variegated with dusky. This bird, though called a snipe, differs much from the true snipe in habits, for it prefers the sea-shore to the marshes, and flies in dense flocks, like the sand-pipers. The semipalmated sand-piper (*Ereunetes pusillus*) and the least sand-piper (*Tringa minutilla*) are quite common on the sea-shore, associate together, and resemble each other closely in hue, yet they can be readily distinguished apart when dead by the semipalmation of the former. Baird's sand-piper (*Tringa bairdii*) and the white-rumped sand-piper (*T. bonapartei*) are like the

least sand-piper in hue, but larger. The white-rumped species is readily recognized by its white upper tail-coverts. The purple sand-piper (*T. maritima*), which is fond of haunting rocky shores, is ashy-black above, with purplish reflections; the under parts are white; the breast is lighter than the back; and it has a white line over the eye. The hue changes to a slaty-gray in winter; and the young are dotted with dusky below.

The dunlin, or red-backed sand-piper (*T. alpina* var. *americana*), is ashy-gray in winter, but in summer the upper parts are chestnut, each feather having a central black field, and nearly all being white-tipped; the breast is streaked with dusky; and the under parts are white, except the belly, which has a broad, black area. The red-breasted, knot, or robin-snipe (*T. canutus*), is quite common on the Atlantic Coast. The upper parts are, in summer, brownish-black, the feathers being tipped with ashy-white; and the under are brownish-red. It is gray in winter. The pectoral sand-piper, jack snipe, grass snipe, or marsh plover (*T. maculata*), does not look unlike the Wilson snipe, though of course both differ in the shape of the bill. The general hue is grayish, variegated above with chestnut. This species is fonder of muddy flats and salt water marshes than of sandy beaches; it is also found on wet ground distant from large bodies of water. When a wing is alarmed it rises promptly, emitting loud, rapid notes, and flies in a zigzag manner, like the snipe, but if it is travelling quietly from one field to another the motion is even. Groups mount to a high altitude sometimes and dart about like feathered spectres, then drop rapidly to the spot from which they rose. This species never goes in large flocks, and that fact, combined with its erratic motion in flight, makes heavy bags quite rare.

The Bartramian sand-piper, upland plover, or field plover (*Actiturus bartramius*), is blackish above, varie-

gated with twany and white; the under parts are a pale tawny; the breast and sides are marked with bars and arrowheads of black; and the legs and bill are pale. This is considered one of the best game birds of its order, owing to the delicacy of its flesh; hence it is eagerly sought by all lovers of the gun. It is a resident of the high plains of the West, as it finds an abundance of food in the numerous and juicy grasshoppers which frequent that section. It moves in large flocks, and as it breeds throughout the country, it may be met with from Canada to the Southern States. Its notes are soft and pleasant as it goes

"Wild whistling o'er the hill"

in September and October, when it is so fat that it might be compared to a ball of butter. It is cunning and cautious in the autumn, and readily recognizes a man with a gun, but it is less wary in spring after its return from the South. The best way of making a large bag of upland plovers is to drive towards them with a horse and carriage, not directly, however, but parallel with them, and shoot the moment the animal stops, or else to place a companion in the most convenient cover and drive them in his direction. Both may get shots by this means. The birds fly in rather open order when alarmed, and very rapidly, so that they get out of harm's way in a short time.

The ruff-breasted sand-piper (*Tryngites rufescens*), which looks like the preceding, but is much smaller, is scattered over the open regions of the Continent. The spotted sand-piper, teeter, peetweet, or sand-lark (*Tringoides macularius*), is very abundant along the sea-shore. It generally travels in small wings numbering from four to sixteen. The adult is of an olive hue above, with a coppery lustre, and a pure white below, the throat and breast being dotted with black markings. The sanderling, or ruddy plover (*Calidris arenaria*), which is usu-

ally common along the coast, has the upper parts varied with ashy, black, and reddish; the under parts below the breast are white. This color changes in winter, the superior region being speckled with white and black, and the lower with white; the reddish tinge disappears.

The tattlers make up in numbers what they lack in diversity of species, being found all over the Continent. Among the best known is the semipalmated tattler, or willet (*Totanus semipalmatus*), which, in summer, is grayish above, with black markings, and white below; the throat, breast and sides, being streaked with dusky. It is devoid of these spots in winter, and presents an ashy-gray hue. Being quite large, it is shot by all lovers of the gun, but it is not highly appreciated for its gastronomic qualities.

The greater telltale, greater yellow-shanks, stone snipe, or yellow-legged tattler (*Totanus melanoleucus*), is a watchful, noisy bird, which seems to have been created for the special purpose of making the sportsmen use "swear words," and of calling the attention of all bay birds to his nefarious designs. One of these spindle-shanked creatures will stand motionless and silent until the fowler approaches, and then give vent to such a peculiar cry that it arouses every living bird within hearing distance, and causes it to leave for safer quarters. It is to the bay birds what the jay is to the denizens of the forest, and, like the latter, it seems to rejoice in the discomfiture of the gunner. Being a frequenter of muddy flats and salt-water marshes, its flesh is not considered good, hence it is not generally shot for the table. The lesser yellow-legs, or telltale (*T. flavipes*), looks like the preceding in everything but size, and is as great a tattler. The solitary tattler (*T. solitarius*) is a lustrous olive-brown above and white below; the sides of the head and neck are streaked with dusky; and the tail is marked with black and white. It is a resident of wet woods and swamps, and one or two

may be found around sheltered pools in autumn. When these are alarmed they fly rapidly and in silence, but at other times they are partial to telling people that they are in the neighborhood. The wandering tattler (*Heteroscelus incanus*) is a resident of the Pacific Coast. It is of a leadish-gray color above, and white below, shaded and barred with gray.

The marlins, or godwits, seem to be getting scarce in several parts of the country, owing, probably, to the indiscriminate war waged upon them, for their size and delicacy of flesh make them objects worthy of pursuit. The two best are the great-marbled godwit, or humility (*Limosa fedoa*), and the Hudsonian godwit, or white-tailed marlin (*L. hudsonica*), which is smaller than the former. The great marlin is of a general rufous color, variegated above with black, brown, and gray; the bill is flesh-colored, tipped with black, and about five inches long. It frequents marshy places near the sea-shore, and, as it is strong of wing, bagging it is no idle pleasure on many occasions. It has a shrill cry, which is odd, loud, and rapid. The white-tailed marlin is not so common as the preceding, and has a more northern habitat. This species is brownish-black above, variegated with gray, rufous, and sometimes white; and the under parts are reddish, variegated with dusky. The winter plumage is grayish, and so is that of the young.

Curlews, which are very abundant from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, breed on high, sandy grounds. The nest is a rude affair, which generally holds four eggs placed in such a manner that their small ends touch. These birds are as cunning as crows, and have such trained eyes that, though they may come within an aggravating distance of the sportsman, yet they manage to keep out of range of his gun, unless he can circumvent them. They are clamorous criers, and such suspicious creatures that they announce the approach

of a man to all their congeners scattered over a large area. The result of their signal of danger is, very often, the discomfiture of the fowler, and the choleric expulsion of words that are not supposed to be used by angels. If they are not shot at much, they become quite tame, and sometimes follow a plowman so closely, in their eagerness to feast on the worms in the newly-turned furrow, that he can kill some with his whip. If a person is concealed in shrubbery, or behind driftwood, he may be able to bring them within reach by imitating their wailing notes, by waving a black handkerchief from the top of a stick, or by using decoys on the sand bars which they frequent. Wing-tipped birds make capital "stools," as they cry loudly, flutter their wings, and make such a racket that their kindred descend to learn what ails them, and keep sweeping round and round them until several are shot. When the birds fly in herds from one point to another, a man may be able to bag several, if he is under cover on their line of flight, but if they detect him by the color of his clothes or any want of carefulness on his part, he will only have his pains for his labor. The usual charge for curlews is four and a half drachms of powder and one and a quarter ounces of No. 7 shot; but if they are mingled with other birds, some sportsmen prefer No. 9, as that is sufficiently effective for all classes. The most marked member of this genus is the sickle-bill, or long-billed curlew (*Numenius longirostris*), which has a bill ranging from five to nine inches in length. Its hue is rufous, with blackish markings. It is very abundant, especially in the Far West. The jack curlew (*N. hudsonicus*) is smaller than the one mentioned, somewhat paler, and its bill is only three or four inches long. It is quite common. The dough-bird, or Esquimaux curlew (*N. borealis*), is smaller than the preceding, and like it in color, but its bill is much shorter, being less than three inches. This

species is found extensively on the Western prairies, where it associates with the golden and upland plover, and flies in flocks with them. These flocks may be approached by using a horse and wagon, as they manifest little fear of quadrupeds; and, being addicted to flying low, large bags can be made very frequently, especially on the bare and open plains. Notwithstanding the abundance of bay birds, they do not afford such good sport as other feathered game, as dogs cannot be used in their pursuit, so that one of the most picturesque elements of sport is wanting. All that is to be done then, is to avoid detection, and shoot the birds when they come within range. In shooting them along shore, sportsmen conceal themselves in blinds made of sedges, and fire away at them when they descend to the decoys planted along the beach. These decoys are usually rude imitations of the black-bellied plover, each being mounted on a single peg. The birds frequently hover over the stools until they receive four or five volleys, as they seem to think there is no necessity for alarm when they see their wooden images resting quietly on their perches. It is sometimes amusing to note how they watch the decoys during a volley, for they eye them in the most peculiar manner, and wheel around them, as if they were trying to find out why they did not attempt to flee from the leaden hail which was decimating the ranks of their living congeners. This habit of flying around the decoys enables a man to kill them in large numbers, it being nothing unusual for a man to bag a hundred brace of bay birds in a day, and even more if they are very numerous, as he may kill thirty or forty at every discharge of his gun, if he is an expert wild-fowler.

CHAPTER XVI.

RAILS.

Their haunts and habits—Charges for a gun—Method of shooting rails —Big bags.

The rails enjoy greater immunity from the guns of sportsmen than any other birds on the Continent considered fit for the table. One cause for this is the fact that they make their habitat in wet meadows and marshes, where it is difficult to reach them without the aid of boats, and that they migrate during the night only, on account of the shortness of their wings, which prevents them from making long flights. Their bright eyes, graceful forms, short, upright tails, active movements, jaunty carriage, and innocent inquisitiveness render them interesting to lovers of birds, while their delicacy of flesh makes them equally so to an epicure. They are fleet of foot, gregarious, and fond of indulging in social gossip when they feel themselves safe, but they relapse into silence the moment a foe appears. They will approach to within a few feet of a man if he stands still, but the least perceptible movement on his part will send them scampering away. That they are not so frightened as they pretend is evident, however, from the readiness with which they reappear, and slyly peep at the intruder if he keeps quiet. They utter a shrill cry which is easily imitated, and to which they are always ready to respond, both by voice and presence, for they rush out of concealment on hearing it. They prefer to use their legs to their wings in escaping a threatened danger, but, if wounded, they resort to diving and swimming under water, or to hiding in the grass or sedges until they are almost run over.

One of their ordinary stratagems for avoiding capture is to sink into the water near a bunch of sedges, until only the bill, and, sometimes, a part of the head is exposed.

Rails are only shot at high tides, as a rule, owing to the difficulty of reaching their haunts without boats, and though the shooting may not last more than two or three hours, it is not unusual for an experienced sportsman to bag from one hundred to three hundred in that time. Rail shooting is carried on along the Atlantic Coast from Connecticut to Florida, but it only reaches perfection on the Delaware River, where the birds are so numerous that any ordinary shot can make a large bag, provided he commands the services of a good "boat pusher" who is acquainted with the marshes. These "pushers" are better for retrieving dead and wounded birds than any dog, for they rarely lose one, though a dozen may be lying in the marsh at the same time. All shooting ceases when the tide commences to ebb; and then the sportsmen who have taken part in the battue meet to compare notes and find out which of their number has the distinguished honor of being "high boat," and to congratulate him on his success. More than two thousand rails are frequently shot on one of these expeditions, besides several ducks and reed birds. The king rail, or fresh-water marsh hen (*Rallus elegans*), which is the largest of the family, frequents fresh-water marshes, though it is sometimes found on salt marshes. It lives largely on wild oats, and being loth to use its wings, it depends on its legs to escape danger on land or water. This species is of a general olive-brown hue, the eyelids being whitish. The clapper rail, or salt-water marsh hen (*R. longirostris*), resembles the preceding in general color, except that it is not so bright. It is also smaller, and equally as averse to using its wings. The red rail, or Virginia corncrake (*R. virginianus*), looks like the king rail, but is not near so large, as it only measures from eight to ten inches in length. It is

partial to dense cover, and frequents both salt and fresh-water marshes, but it is only found in the former places early in the summer and autumn.

The sora, ortolan, or Carolina rail (*Porzana carolina*), is the best known of the *Rallidæ*, and the one most generally shot, those previously mentioned being pursued but very little, owing to the comparative coarseness of their flesh, and their want of game qualities. This species is olive-brown above, variegated with black and numerous white spots and streaks; the flanks are varied with black and white; the face and central line of the throat are black; and the remainder of the throat, the breast, and the line over the eyes are bluish-gray. The yellow-breasted rail (*P. noveboracensis*) is such an exceedingly secluded bird that it is rarely shot. The breast is yellowish; the flanks are dark and barred with white; the upper portions are varied with black and yellowish-brown, and marked with white semi-circles and transverse bars. The Florida gallinule (*Gallinula galeata*) is an inhabitant of the Gulf States, where it is exceedingly abundant. It can be seen in solid phalanxes along the Indian River in Florida, and in the southern portion of the State. Its back is brownish-olive; its head, neck, and under parts are grayish-black; the wings and tail are dusky, but the edges of the wings are white; and the bill is red, tipped with yellow. An adult is about fifteen inches in length. The purple gallinule (*Porphyrio martinica*), which is most abundant in the Southwestern States, is a handsome bird, its head, neck, and under parts being purplish-blue, and the upper olive-green; the bill is red with a yellow tip; and the legs are yellowish. The head, neck, and the lower part of the back of the young are brownish, and the under parts whitish. The coot, or sea-crow (*Fulica americana*), has widely lobed feet like the phalaropes, so that it is more at home on the water than on the land. It frequents fresh waters, and

though its flesh is not considered of much importance by some persons, others think it is equal to that of the rabbit, hence it is often killed by fowlers. Its general color is a dark-slate, paler below, blackening on the head and neck, and tinged with olive on the back. The edge of the wings is whitish; the bill is whitish, and marked with reddish black at the tip; and the feet are a dull-green. The Carolina rail is the only one that is bagged in large numbers, as it is not only the most abundant, but the most delicate in flesh. This is nearly always killed from boats, the ordinary charge of a gun being from two to two and a half drachms of powder, and from three-fourths to an ounce of No. 12 shot, though some persons use No. 10. As one can keep dry at this sport, and it can be enjoyed in the pleasantest season of the year, it is a favorite with those lovers of the gun who reside in convenient cities, and have not much time to spare from business. To show what bags can be made at rail shooting, I give the number killed by a party at one tide, but I substitute letters for names for reasons easily understood. A, shot two hundred and fifty-nine; B, two hundred and fourteen; C, one hundred and eleven; D, one hundred and five; E, one hundred and three; F, eighty-five; or a total of eight hundred and seventy-seven. These figures prove that a person must have plenty of ammunition, and work hard at rail shooting.

CHAPTER XVII.

PIGEONS, DOVES, BITTERNS, CRANES, AND HERONS.

Terms used by sportsmen for describing companies of birds.

The wild pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) is more abundant than any other bird on the Continent, for its numbers are so incalculable that the word "myriads" is the only one which will give a person an idea of the vast throngs that swarm over the country during the breeding season. These pass certain regions in such dense masses that they actually shut out the sun, while the movements of their wings produce a roar like that of a hurricane. When they alight in a forest, the trees seem to be one mass of feathers, for scarcely a leaf can be seen, and every branchlet capable of holding a bird contains one. Some of the pigeonries cover an area of one hundred and eighty square miles, and as each tree bears from one to fifty nests, a person can imagine what a stirring scene the forest presents. The birds begin building their nests about the first of April, and before that time if the season is favorable. These nests consist of a few bunches of dry sticks and twigs, yet they are so ingeniously interlaced with the branches that heavy winds cannot dislodge them. The female lays only one or two eggs, and these are generally fertile. When the young are hatched the branches are sometimes so heavily weighted that they snap and fall to the ground, or remain hanging like broken limbs. The forest presents a very ragged appearance on such occasions, and looks as if it had been swept by a tornado. If the first laid eggs are destroyed, the pigeons are supposed to lay another

set, as a pigeonry which is deserted one week may be occupied again the next.

After all the mast in a pigeonry has been eaten up, the old birds start on foraging expeditions at daylight, and some go so far that they do not return until midnight. The distance the latter traverse in that time must be very great, when we consider how swiftly they can fly. One of the greatest wonders connected with these birds is the instinctive manner in which they find their own nests at any hour of the night, although they are the counterpart of millions of others in the neighborhood. As soon as the pigeons take up their residence in a forest, the men and boys in the neighboring districts arm themselves with guns and clubs and sally forth to deal destruction among them. Those who have guns shoot them all night, and those possessing clubs climb the trees and knock them down as fast as they can. Thousands upon thousands are slaughtered in a night in this manner, yet it does not seem to diminish their numbers from year to year. Sportsmen generally take their stands in glades and shoot the birds as they fly to and from their roosts each morning and evening, and though this is somewhat better than killing them on their perches, yet the destruction is almost equally as great, owing to the density of the flights. Vast numbers are also caught alive by netters, for the purpose of being used in pigeon tournaments, or to be kept until they are wanted for market. The netters sometimes pay the owner of forest land from ten to a hundred dollars for a spot where the flight is good, or for a drinking place or salt marsh which the birds frequent regularly. Their first movement is to bait the ground with salt, and then to set their seines. When everything is ready, they conceal themselves, and wait until the first pigeon arrives and announces the finding of the bait. The moment it does that, they make preparations for casting. The satisfied piping of the discoverer of the

dainty morsels brings its congeners beside it in such numbers that they stand on each other so thickly that only a mass of pointed tails can be seen. The decisive moment has then arrived, and at a signal from one of the netters, the strings of the seine are pulled, and it falls upon the dense mass of struggling, startled birds. It is not an uncommon thing to trap from two to three hundred pigeons at every fall of the net, and as the falls are numerous throughout the day, one may imagine how many are captured.

Trapping pigeons on salted or baited ground does not require so much tact and experience as trapping them when they are flying over a net. This latter method requires live pigeons as decoys, and is somewhat cruel, as the decoys have their eyes sewn up and a light weight fastened to their legs to prevent them from flying away. These are thrown into the air when a flock is passing by, to attract its attention, while trained stools—that is, pigeons trained or forced to act as if they were alighting—are worked industriously at the same time. If these bring down the flight the net is sprung and fastened at the four corners; the captives are then taken out and placed in coops, which stand ready to receive them. The best time for netting is the morning and evening. The catch varies from nothing to a thousand or more per day for each man. From five hundred to a thousand men are sometimes engaged in trapping in a single roost, and they keep at the business as long as it pays. The average price of dead birds is from fifteen to fifty cents a dozen, and of live birds, from thirty to seventy-five cents a dozen. Buyers, who are liberally supplied with barrels and ice, accompany the netters and shooters to the pigeonry, and make their purchases as rapidly as they can, in order to be first in the market. When the squabs appear, another raid is made on the roosts, as these are considered equal to quail in delicacy of flavor.

The wild pigeon is a favorite practising target with white and red archers, as its rapid flight thoroughly tests the accuracy of their aim, the strength of their bows, and the feathering of their arrows. Some of the shots which these men make would cause European bowmen to open their eyes, and mouths too, with astonishment, and to think very little of their own prowess, when they see birds going at full speed brought down by a short hunting arrow and a comparatively light bow.

The colors of an adult pigeon are dull bluish-gray above, and purplish-red below, whitening on the crissum; the sides of the neck are golden, with purplish reflections; some of the wing-coverts are black-spotted; the tail is cuneate, the middle feathers being bluish-black, and the others ashy or whitish. The bird has a length of seventeen inches.

The band-tailed pigeon (*Columba fasciata*) is shot occasionally, but it is not much sought for, even by pot-hunters, although its flesh is quite palatable.

The Carolina dove (*Zenadura cariolensis*) is seldom killed for food by whites, owing to its small size, though hungry Indians are glad to get it.

The bittern, or bog-bull (*Botaurus minor*), which is frequently shot for the table, may be readily recognized by its form. It is of a dull-brown color, speckled and streaked with buff and white above; the chin and throat line are white; and there is a black spot on each side of the neck. The bill is yellow at the base and dark at the tip; and the legs are greenish. This bird is so slow in flight that it can be easily bagged. A smaller species than this, called the least bittern, is considered quite a delicacy by some of the Indians.

Cranes and herons are also shot occasionally, as their flesh is excellent, especially when it is a little high. They fight bravely when wounded, and, as their bills are sharp, persons ought to be careful in approaching them.

Two species of crane are indigenous to the Continent, namely, the white or whooping crane, and the sand-hill crane. The plumage of the former is pure white, the bill dusky-greenish, the head carmine, and the legs black. The second, which is smaller than its congener, is plumbeous-gray in color.

The herons are quite numerous and move in immense sedges in some portions of the Southern and Pacific States. The best known is the great blue heron, which is about four feet in length when full grown. The adults of both sexes are grayish-blue above; the neck is pale purplish-brown, with a white throat-line; the head is black, and has a white frontal patch; the under parts are mainly black, streaked with white; the bill and eyes are yellow, and the legs greenish. The little blue heron is of a slaty-blue color, but inclined to be purplish on the head and neck; the bill is blue; the eyes are yellow, and the legs black. The young are white, but they can be easily distinguished from the young of the snowy heron by their bluish tracings and the color of the bill and feet. The great white heron is pure white; the bill, eyes, and legs are yellow, the latter being greenish in front. The great white egret, or white heron, has very long plumes of feathers, which droop over the tail, during the breeding season. The bill and eyes are yellow, and the legs black. The little white egret resembles the preceding. The bill and legs are mainly black, and the eyes and toes yellow. The Louisiana egret is slaty-blue on the back and wings, and chiefly white below; the bill is black and yellow, and the legs yellowish-green. The reddish egret and green heron may be recognized by their markings. The egrets are shot principally for their plumes, which command a good price in the markets of the civilized world. They do not come under the head of game birds, and are mentioned only to complete the list of the *Ardeidæ*.

HOW TO PACK GAME—TERMS USED BY SPORTSMEN.

Game should be packed in the natural state, and the feathers laid smoothly in their proper places. Birds that are shot, should be hung up by the feet before being forwarded any distance, in order that the blood may run out through the mouth. All feathered game should be packed entire, as drawn birds are not supposed to keep as well as the undrawn, nor do they realize so good a price in the market. Never pack birds when they are warm or wet, and do not send those that are much mutilated to market, as they are worth but little, and may injure the lot. Smooth the feathers, place the heads under the wings, and the breast upwards. Pack all tightly, so that they will not shift about, and fill the packages in such a manner that they may be closed by a slight pressure on the top. Use light, medium-sized, strong boxes or hampers. In shipping quails any distance, they will keep better if they are wrapped in paper, especially in soft weather. Birds should not be allowed to become hard frozen before being shipped, to be well chilled is sufficient. Live pigeons, or other feathered game, should not be kept caged too long, as they lose flesh every hour they are in the coop, and become so thin and soiled as to be rendered almost worthless in a comparatively short time. Their flesh also becomes insipid.

The following terms are used by sportsmen in describing companies of the different kinds of birds.

Turkeys—A "drove," or "flock."
Grouse—A "pack," a "brood," or "family."
Quails—A "bevy."
Partridges—A "covey."
Swans—A "herd," a "whiteness."
Geese—A "gaggle," when on the water; a "string" or "skein," when flying.
Black Brant—A "gang."
Ducks—A "paddling," on the water; a "team," on wing.
Mallards—A "sord."
Widgeons—(according to numbers,) a "company," "bunch," "trip," or "knob."
Teal—A "spring."
Coots—A "covert."
Sheldrakes—A "dopping."
Woodcocks—A "flight."
Snipe—A "walk," or "wisp."
Plovers—A "wing."
Curlews—A "herd."
Bay birds in general—A "flock."
Wild Pigeons—A "flight."
Herons—A "sedge."