

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXVI.

AUGUST, 1883.

No. 4.

BOB WHITE, THE GAME BIRD OF AMERICA.

Of all the game birds of America, none is better appreciated by the sportsman than little Bob White. He may be found from southern Maine and Canada to the Gulf, and from the Atlantic to the high central plains, and he is known by various names. In the North and East, he is called Quail; in the South and West, he is Partridge; while everywhere, he is known as Bob White. Let us then call him as he calls himself, and we will not be berated for our ignorance of natural history. In fact, he is neither quail nor partridge; but, to our mind he seems more akin to the latter than to the former of his European cousins. The quail of Europe is a smaller and more dumpy bird than our little friend. His flesh is dark and loaded with fat. His plumage is dull and his aspect plebeian. He does not form into coveys, but flocks at the periods of his migrations, when he flies at night, and in the company of countless numbers, during the month of April crosses the Mediterranean to the European shores and islands, returning to Africa in the autumn.* He is a polygamous, pugnacious, selfish little Arab, and lacks entirely that gallant bearing and affectionate nature which are marked characteristics of

the American bird. A wretched husband, he abandons his wives and young to their fate at the waning of the honeymoon; and his selfish manners are inherited by his chicks, who "are hardly full grown when they separate, or, if kept together, fight obstinately, and their quarrels are terminated only by their common destruction." It belies both the appearance and character of Bob White to call him after such a mean-looking, disreputable bird as the European quail.

The common European gray-partridge differs somewhat in form from our bird, which in this particular resembles more closely the red-legged partridge of Europe; but what is said of the habits of Bob White applies equally well to the European partridge. The latter weighs twice as much as Bob White, but he has not Bob's sturdy, rapid, and often long-continued flight. Like our bird, his flesh is white; he forms into coveys; is monogamous, and keeps with his wife and brood till the following spring. He is not migratory or nocturnal in his habits. His wings are similar in form to those of our bird, having the third quill-feather the longest, which is a characteristic of the partridges, and distinguishes them from the quails, which have the first quill-feather the longest.

It is true that Bob White is sometimes partly migratory in his habits. It is said that he has "a running season" in October, when, joining a pack, he leaves the region of his birth and travels on foot in a southerly and easterly direction till he reaches the borders of streams and bays, where he may remain till November, when he returns to his former haunts. During his travels it would be useless to hunt him, for he then runs with great rapidity before the dog and will not take wing.

* "The quails assemble at the approach of autumn, to cross the Black Sea over to the southern coast: the order of this emigration is invariable: toward the end of August the quails, in a body, choose one of those fine days when the wind, blowing from the north at sunset, promises them a fine night; they take their departure about seven in the evening, and finish a journey of fifty leagues by break of day,—a wonderful distance for a short-winged bird, and that is generally fat and sluggish of flight."

"Such prodigious quantities have appeared on the western coasts of the kingdom of Naples, in the vicinity of Nettuno, that *one hundred thousand* have in one day been taken, within the space of four or five miles."—*Daniel's "Rural Sports."*

The European partridge and Bob White differ in their call-notes and in their longevity. Daniel, in his superb "Rural Sports," London, 1812, states: "It is said the partridge, if unmolested, lives from fifteen to seventeen years; others dispute this computation, and maintain that they live seven years, and give over laying in the sixth, and are in full vigor when two years old." Dr. Elisha T. Lewis, in his "American Sportsman," Philadelphia, 1857, says that the average duration of Bob White's life is three to five years; but neither of these authors states how these facts were ascertained. Our distinguished ornithologist, Dr. Coues, classes Bob White among the partridges, and says:

"Our partridges [viz. Bob White, the Mountain, Valley, and Massena quails, etc.] may be distinguished among American *Gallinae*, by the foregoing characters, but not from those of the Old World; and it is highly improbable that, as a group, they are separable from all the forms of the latter by any decided peculiarities. I find that the principal supposed character, namely, a tothing of the under mandible, is very faintly indicated in some forms, and entirely wanting in others. Pending final issue, however, it is expedient to re-organize the group, so strictly limited geographically, if not otherwise. * * * In

If, however, many of our friends should persist—as they certainly will—in calling Bob White a quail, then they should call a brood of these birds a *bevy*; while a *covey* should designate a brood, if they call him a Virginia partridge. The plumage differs so much with latitude, that some naturalists have made out three species: the *Ortyx Virginianus*, the *O. Floridanus*, and the *O. Texanus*. The male of the *Floridanus* is about the size of the female *Virginianus*. Its bill is longer and jet black; its colors are darker and its black markings are heavier. The *Texanus* is of the size of the *Floridanus*; the colors are paler, the prevailing shade being rather gray than brown; upper part much variegated with tawny. Sometimes he dons a coat which is nearly white. One of these little colorless birds is shown in the engraving on page 486. He was shot in the month of November, by Mr. Charles Hallock, near Berlin, in Worcester County, Maryland.

If, after a day of successful shooting over a considerable area, the sportsman will count the number of cock and hen birds which have fallen to his aim, he will find the former al-



"BOB WHITE!"

habits, they agree more or less completely with the well known Bob White: Head completely feathered, and usually crested, the crest frequently assuming a remarkable shape, nasal fosse not filled with feathers; the nostrils covered with a naked scale; tarsi and toes naked, the latter scarcely or not fringed."

ways outnumbering the latter. The exact ratio I do not know. I have but once separated them; then, in a bag of forty, I found twenty-four cocks to sixteen hens. According to the European naturalist, Ray, the European

partridge hatches one-third more males than females.

The average weight of Bob White varies considerably with the nature of his feeding-

of December, that would average eight ounces." Dr. Lewis, in his "American Sportsman," gives a record of ten braces of birds shot in the neighborhood of Mount



PARTRIDGES (*PERDIX CINEREA*), MALE AND FEMALE.

ground, the weather preceding the time when he is shot, and the age of the bird. Probably six and three-quarter ounces is a fair average weight. In Southern Maryland, I have shot a few cock-birds which weighed eight ounces and one-quarter, and one even as high in weight as eight ounces and three-quarters. Fifty birds shot in the middle of North Carolina, last December, averaged seven ounces. Those birds were cocks and hens, old and young, just as they came to bag in the field. Mr. Frank Schley says: "I have often killed a bag of birds along the Monocacy and Potomac bottoms in Maryland, in the month

Holly, New Jersey, that averaged eight ounces.

While the woodcock and Wilson snipe are fated to disappear as civilization robs them of their restricted feeding-grounds, Bob White, if protected by the enforcement of judicious game laws, will thrive in the midst of cultivated lands, and will continue to test the gamecraft and marksmanship of future generations. He is destined to remain the game-bird of America, and he is worthy of it; for there is none more impetuous in his flight, none that has such extended range in his feeding-grounds and coverts, none that de-



WHITE BOB WHITE.

mands of the gunner more knowledge of his habits in order to find him, and none that tests so well the training of a dog and the eye and nerve of the sportsman. We should be thankful that he, with the black-bass, will be spared in the relentless action of that artificial selection which is slowly but surely taking from us the woodcock, the snipe, the grouse, and the wild trout.

Unlike the grouse and the European quail, our little American is a faithful husband and devoted father. To find Bob in Mormon practices is rare. Should he, however, discover that his gallant bearing and spruce attire have made him doubly beloved, he will show impartial devotion to his two spouses. From a fence-rail overhead, with his two wives on their nests, not two feet apart, he will gladden both their little hearts with his love-song. But he is naturally a monogamist. He selects his mate and makes his courtship in the spring, soon after the snow and frost have gone, when the willows have turned yellow, while the frogs are piping in the marsh, and the Wilson snipe is drumming above the

meadows. If the wintry storm should come back, the mates will re-assemble in a covey and keep each other warm o' nights and huddle on the sunny slopes during the day.

In the month of May they build their simple nest, formed of a slight depression in the ground lined with dried leaves and soft grasses. This nest may be found under a tussock of grass, beneath a small bush, in the brier-grown corner of a worm-fence, at the foot of an old stump, alongside a log, or often in the open fields of wheat or clover. The nest is sometimes closed above with stubble mingled with the grass tussock or briers, and provided with a side entrance; but the nest is as often found open above as closed.

In this nest the hen-bird lays from one dozen to two dozen eggs of a pure, brilliant white. While the hen is laying and during her time of nesting, the cock is the happiest of husbands. Filled with joy and pride, he sits on the low bough of a neighboring tree, or perches on the fence-rail quite near his spouse, whom he never wearies of telling that he is "Bob White — your Bob White," in such a brilliant, happy

voice that the farmer stops his work to listen to him.

In from three to four weeks the little downy young leave the egg, and even with pieces

very amusing to those familiar with the startling whir of the old birds. When too large to gather under the mother they take their flight at night-fall, from the stubble or grain field where they have been feeding, and thus, breaking the scent, drop down in a compact cloud into some open space under a bush or tussock, and cozily huddling up to one another, form a little circle with their heads outward. Thus nestled, they see on all sides, and can spring at a moment from their bed to evade any foe that may steal on them in the night or at the early dawn. If the ground be covered with snow or hoar frost, or the weather be wet or blustering, they may remain huddled together all day, or may not venture to feed till late in the forenoon. But if they are greeted with the sunrise and good weather, they cheep a good-morning to one another in soft, cheerful voices, and go at once to their feeding-grounds, where they regale themselves on the wheat of the stubbles, the buckwheat, the seeds of grasses, and the rag-weed, and on the berries of the haw, the gum, and the chicken-grape. About ten or eleven o'clock they retire to the sunny side of a covert, and they do not venture



BOB WHITE AND EUROPEAN QUAIL. (COTURNIX COMMUNIS.)

of egg-shell yet sticking on their backs they go off with their parents to be taught to search for food. They feed on the seeds of various grasses, weeds, and cereals, and on berries; and they return a hundred-fold the bounty of their landlord, by destroying for his benefit not only countless numbers of destructive insects, but quantities of weed-seed, one to two gills of which the adult birds can stow away in their little crops during a day's feeding.

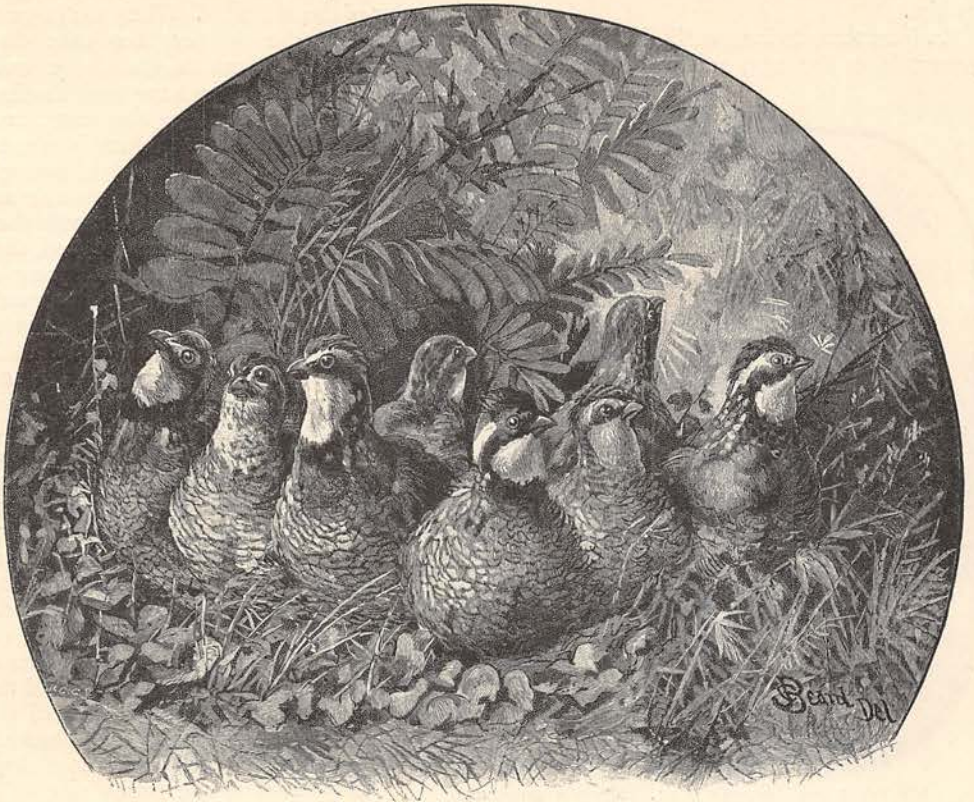
If rain should come on, or the cold wind blow, the mother calls her younglings under her wings, where they nestle safe from the chilling storm. When night comes on, she and her spouse take their little ones to some place removed from the thicket, where prowl the fox and the weasel. Soon after being hatched, the young, in running, assist themselves with their tiny wings, and when two weeks old they take wing with a flutter that is

forth again till three or four in the afternoon, when they again seek their food till sundown and bed-time.

In October and November, the sportsman often "springs" coveys containing birds too small to be shot; sometimes half the covey will be in this condition, the other half full-grown birds. This fact may be accounted for thus: The eggs and the young are often destroyed by the wet and cold of the early summer, or by beasts and birds of prey. If this calamity should overtake them, the hen again goes to laying, and this second brood is retarded by the time lost between the first and second nestings. When birds of two sizes are found in the same covey, it seems to show that the parents have raised two broods; and this, I think, happens oftener to the south than to the north of the James River,—the summer of our middle and northern States being generally too short for the raising of two broods. Baird says: "They have two broods in a season, the second in August"; while Audubon states that "in Texas, the Floridas, and as far eastward as the neighborhood of Charleston, in South Carolina, it breeds twice in the year, first in May, and again in September."



BOB WHITE EGG (FULL SIZE).



AT DAWN.

The cock-bird shares with the hen the duties and restraints of incubation. If his spouse should desire another brood, he will take charge of the half-grown young while she makes her second nesting. When the second brood appears, it runs with the first, and they form together one happy family, and remain with their parents till the following spring, in the pairing season, when the old family ties are severed.

The devotion of the parents to their unfledged young, and the real affection which the members of a family have for one another up to the time of their separation in the spring, have been so touchingly described by two of the most gifted of our writers on field sports, that I must here quote them; especially as the writings of W. P. Hawes ("J. Cypress, Jr.") are now rarely met with. He says:

"If you would see the purest, the sincerest, the most affecting piety of a parent's love, startle a family of young quails and watch the conduct of the mother. She will not leave you. No, not she. But she will fall at your feet, uttering a noise which none but a distressed mother can make, and she will run, and flutter, and seem to try to be caught, and cheat your outstretched hand, and affect to be wing-broken, and

wounded, and yet have just strength to tumble along, until she has drawn you, fatigued, a safe distance from her threatened children, and the hopes of her young heart; and then she will mount, whirring with glad strength, and away through the maze of trees you had not seen before, like a close-shot bullet, fly to her skulking infants. Listen, now! Do you hear those three half-plaintive notes, quickly and clearly poured out? She is calling the boys and girls together. She sings not now 'Bob White!' nor 'Ah! Bob White!' That is her husband's love-call, or his trumpet-blast of defiance. But she calls sweetly and softly for her lost children. Hear them 'Peep! peep! peep!' at the welcome voice of their mother's love! They are coming together. Soon the whole family will meet again."

The following is by Henry William Herbert ("Frank Forrester"):

"Unlike the young broods of the woodcock, which are mute, save the twitter with which they rise, the beaves of quail appear to be attached to each other by tender affection. If dispersed by accidental causes, either in the pursuit of their food, or from being flushed by some casual intruder, so soon as their first alarm has passed over, they begin calling to each other with a small, plaintive note, quite different from the amorous whistle of the male bird, and from their merry, day-break cheeping, and each one running toward the sound, and repeating it at intervals, they soon collect themselves together into one happy little family.

"If, however, the ruthless sportsman has been



CALIFORNIA VALLEY PARTRIDGE OR QUAIL. (LOPHORTYX CALIFORNICUS.)

among them with his well-trained setter and unerring gun, so that death has sorely thinned their numbers, they will protract their little call for their lost comrades even to night-fall; and in such cases — I know not if it be fancy on my part — there has often seemed to me to be an unusual degree of melancholy in their wailing whistle.

“Once this struck me especially. I had found a small bevy of thirteen birds in an orchard, close to the house in which I was passing a portion of the autumn, and in a very few minutes killed twelve of them, for they lay hard in the tedded clover, and it was perfectly open shooting. The thirteenth and last bird, rising with two others which I killed right and left, flew but a short distance and dropped among some sumacs in the corner of a rail fence. I could have shot him certainly enough, but some undefined feeling induced me to call my dog to heel, and spare his little life; yet afterward I almost regretted what I certainly intended at the time for mercy. For day after day, so long as I remained in the country, I heard his sad call from morn till dewy eve, crying for his departed friends, and full, apparently, of memory, which is, alas! but too often another name for sorrow.

“It is a singular proof how strong is the passion for the chase and the love of pursuit implanted by nature in the heart of man, that however much, when not influenced by the direct heat of sport, we depre-

cate the killing of these little birds, and pity the individual sufferers, the moment the dog points and the bevy springs, or the propitious morning promises good sport, all the compunction is forgotten in the eagerness and emulation which are natural to our race.”

Bob White schools the wing-shot as severely as the wily trout tries the angler. Like the trout, he has habits which we must be acquainted with in order to find him. If the weather be fair, start early, for the birds will be on their feeding-grounds at sunrise, and will be found in the fields of stubble, or in the midst of the rag-weed, and along the brier-fringed ditches; and do not forget the field of buckwheat, for they are especially fond of it. About ten or eleven they will cease feeding, and will seek the sunny side of some covert near a stream, where they will quench their thirst after their morning meal. Here they will dust and preen themselves, and take their noonday siesta. The birds will generally remain here till three or four hours after mid-



EUROPEAN RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE. (CACCABIS RUF A.)

day, and closely huddled as they are. they are difficult for the dog to find.

The sportsman, if wise, will now follow the example of the birds, and seeking the quiet of some sheltered sunny nook, will take his lunch and rest himself and his dogs. How well we remember that pleasant spring side, with the dogs stretched before us to catch the warm rays of the sun, their eyes furtively glancing at us, waiting for their share of the lunch; the fragrant cigar, with pleasant jokes at our bad shots and untimely tumble, the generous admiration of our companions' skill, and talk about the wonderful working of the dogs.

If the weather is very dry, do not seek the birds on the uplands, for Bob White, though no hydropathist, likes the vicinity of water. But if your hunt occurs after a rainy spell, go to the upland stubble-fields, and work your dogs along the border of the driest and sunniest of the coverts.

If it is windy and cold, the birds will be found in covert along the sunny lee slopes of the valleys, in the tall rag-weed and briers of the hollows, and on the sunny borders of the woods and hedge-rows. They will not now lie well to the dog, and when flushed will go like bullets into the deepest thickets. Should you hope to prevent this by getting them in between you and the dogs, you may often be mistaken, for in all likelihood they will spring over your head like sparks from under a blacksmith's hammer. The shooting is now difficult, for you will have to turn rapidly on your heel as the bird passes over you, and

drop your aim just *under* him while he is only momentarily in sight.

If you had a fair day yesterday, but after a long spell of wet weather, and you returned home last night in a clear, cold, quiet air, you may expect to see the sunshine of to-morrow sparkling in the hoar frost which covers the ground and all the herbage. Tarry at home till the sun has nearly melted the ice off the meadows, for you will get nothing but wet legs by tramping the fields while the ground is iced and while the birds are yet huddled and have not spread their scent.

When the dogs are seeking the coveys, let them range widely. When they stand the covey, do not exhaust yourself with haste in reaching them, but approach leisurely and quietly. When the covey springs be very quick, but

very, *very* steady, and do not fire till you are sure of your aim. Remember that it is your left arm and wrist that direct your gun; so grasp it well forward on the fore-end, and not near the breech, as some do. You will thus be able to give your gun that quick and firm motion which is indispensable to skill in "snap-shooting"; and all shooting at Bob White is of that character.

If it is your first shot of the season, and you are not gifted with a very steady nerve, you will do well to charge your gun with but one cartridge. By doing so, it is probable that a bird will drop to your first shot. If you had had two shots, you might have been too anxious for two birds, and thus have lost both. After two or three successes with a single barrel, try "a double" over the next point.

Always flush the birds yourself, for a dog "hied on" to flush may do so of his own accord when you are out of gunshot. At the springing of the covey, the dog must "down charge," or "drop to shot," and in either case hold his charge till ordered to "hold up" or to "seek dead." If he "break shot," he will often cause you great vexation in the loss of shots by his flushing birds which did not spring with their fellows, but which now get up in rapid succession, and before you have had time to reload. But a good retriever has his greatest pleasure in fetching a dead bird, and the intense satisfaction this act gives to him often causes him to lose his head and rush in on the report of the gun. The dropping to shot and retaining charge is one of

the prime requisites in a dog, and is as difficult to teach a good retriever as it is essential to the true enjoyment of sport.

If the dog is unsteady and apt to "break shot," do not load if you have fired only one barrel, for in so doing other birds may rise just as you have opened your gun or are handling a cartridge.

After the covey has been scattered give your dog but little range. Keep your eye well on him as you approach the ground where you or your gillie has marked the birds. Be ready, if he be rash when he "winds" the birds, to chide him, in a voice just sufficient to be heard. *Steady, there! Toho!*

Above all things, do not get excited and gain in voice as you lose in temper. Take it leisurely, be quiet and cool, if you would enjoy the sport and kill cleanly. By all means, train your dog, if possible, to hunt without shouting to him. A short, quick whistle should call his attention. Then give him the order he waits for by waves of the hand: forward, for "on"; a wave to the right or left, as you may desire him to quarter; while the upraised arm, with the palm of your hand toward him, should bring him to "toho." Or, two short whistles may be often better for the same order, while one much prolonged should bring him "to heel."

A dog that with head well up winds his birds and is stanch on a covey, that will drop to shot and retain his charge till ordered to retrieve, and will receive and obey your orders from the whistle and the motions of your arm and hand, is a dog indeed. Such dogs exist. Should you shoot over such a one, make a note of him as having the education which your next puppy shall receive. You may never possess such a dog; but if a true sportsman, you will ever endeavor to have one like him.

After the covey has been flushed and shot at and the birds have been well scattered, the real enjoyment in Bob White shooting begins. One may now have single and double shots over all kinds of ground and at birds taking every conceivable direction of flight. But often, the best of markers will be baffled in finding the birds whose flight he has carefully noted after the springing of the covey. The following incident is typical of the experience of all sportsmen: A large covey was once flushed and shot at, three birds falling to our fire. My friend and I watched the other birds as they flew across a swale, where we sprung them, and we saw them sail with extended wings over a large field on the valley slope, into which they dropped after a few flutters of their wings. There could be no doubt as to the whereabouts of the birds, because the

whole field, from its inclination to our line of sight, was in full view, and was quite an open sedge field with its surface sparsely studded with stunted pines. On our approach to the field, the dogs quartered it, but they did not come to a stand. One dog flushed a bird on which he came suddenly, and he at once "charged." We found the dogs useless, and calling them to "heel," we walked slowly into the sedge. When we were about in the center of the field, the birds began to rise successively and singly in all directions; in front, on our side, and sometimes behind us, giving us delightful shots. Similar experiences recurring so often have made some sportsmen suppose that Bob White has a voluntary power of retaining his scent, and thus in time of danger eludes the dogs. But this well known occurrence can be explained otherwise. Often when the frightened birds alight, they do not run but instantly crouch with their wings closely pressed against their bodies, so as to squeeze themselves into the smallest compass. This act, no doubt, causes a diminution in the emission of their effluvia. But if the birds have run after alighting, the dogs will surely find them, provided they do not run rapidly and to great distances; in which case the dogs are baffled by the multiplicity of scents; and especially will this be so if the dog gets on the trail of a bird which doubles like a hare on its track.

This baffling of a dog on ground containing a recently scattered covey shows that time should be allowed for the birds to recover from their confusion and to begin to run together, before you "hie on" the dogs to find them. If you are familiar with the country and can remember the landmarks, the proper method is to flush two or three coveys, and then begin to hunt the scattered birds of the respective coveys in the order in which you flushed them.

To become a successful shot at Bob White, the sportsman should bear in mind that Bob, immediately after he has sprung, flies with a velocity which probably exceeds that of any other bird; and also that, unless fairly hit, he can carry off a large number of pellets. When a covey springs, it rises at a considerable angle with the ground. Hence, in shooting at a bird in a flushed covey, the sportsman of unsteady nerve and sluggish muscles is apt to undershoot, the bird rising with such velocity that by the time the gunner has brought his gun into position the bird has passed above his line of sight. As a rule, I think that about one second generally elapses between the instant of springing of the bird and the moment of fire. This interval gives the bird time to gain a moderately horizontal line of flight, and allows the sportsman to get a fair aim.



MRS. BOB WHITE AND FAMILY.

In shooting at an incoming bird, let him be out of sight and just below the rib of your gun at the moment of firing. At a bird going overhead, wait till he has passed well over; then shoot under him. At straight-away shots hold a little high, so that you just catch a glimpse of the bird over your barrels.

In shooting at cross shots, it should be understood that the velocity of an ounce of No. 8 shot driven with three drams of powder is near to 900 feet per second. In that second a Bob White, if under full headway, will go 88 feet, if we estimate the velocity of his flight so low as only a mile a minute. If he is flying directly across your line of sight and thirty yards off, the shot will take one-tenth of a second to reach that distance, and in one-tenth of a second the bird has gone over eight and eight-tenths feet. So, if we should fire a snap-shot directly at a cross-flying bird thirty yards distant, the center of the cloud of shot would fall about nine feet behind him, and he would pass by unscathed. To kill him "clean," you must hold nine feet ahead of him. To some sportsmen, nine feet may seem a great distance to "hold ahead" on a cross-flying bird thirty

yards away, but not to those who have noticed attentively the relations of the line of their aim to the position of the bird *at the very moment they hear the report of their gun*. Also, estimations of distances in the air beside a small and quickly moving object are very unreliable, and often when the sportsman thinks he has fired only one foot ahead of a bird he has really held ahead three feet. Let some one suspend horizontally in the air an unfamiliar object that must be distant from fence rails and other things whose dimensions you know, and then guess its length. You will, after a few trials, be satisfied that the estimation of actual lengths at thirty yards is very loose guess-work.

Bob White is a tough and hardy little fellow, and the true sportsman, always a humane man, will remember this and endeavor to kill him outright. This can be done only by hitting him fairly with the center of the charge. Often a bird will fly two or three hundred yards though mortally wounded. It is the duty of all sportsmen to watch carefully the flight of the birds he has shot at, and his experience of the nature of their flight will tell him if the bird has been struck. If he concludes that he has been, then it is his bounden

duty to bring that bird to bag, and that right quickly.

The extraordinary vitality of this vigorous bird was once forcibly impressed on me. A covey was flushed at about one hundred yards from the edge of a wood. Only a few of the birds flew to the woods. One of them, going at a tremendous velocity, crossed my position at a distance of about forty yards. Holding my gun at what I judged was the proper distance ahead of him, I fired. This was the only shot fired at the birds making for the wood.

"Sam," said I to our negro gillie, "I think I hit that bird."

"No, sah," said Sam; "I tink not, sah. He's a-gwine to whah he forgit he lef' suffin, sah!"

Sam is a good marker, and has carefully watched the flight of hundreds of birds shot at. Yet I could not entirely satisfy myself that the bird was not fairly hit, though he kept straight on in his vigorous flight. A sprained foot prevented rapid walking, and my companion entered the wood, with the dogs, before me. As I struck the edge of the woods I heard the report of his gun, and after proceeding about one hundred yards I heard a second shot, and in another instant a bird tumbled through the air and fell about a dozen feet in advance of me. I called out:

"I have them both!"

"Both what?" said he. "I only shot one bird, and the other flew away from your direction and I missed him clean."

The bird my friend shot lay with his head toward me; the other, a large cock, lay on his back with his bill pointing toward the other bird, and not more than a foot from him. Both birds were warm. The large cock was the one I had fired at. He was struck fairly in the head and chest, and yet he had pitched into the woods and gone altogether nearly two hundred yards before he succumbed to his death-wounds. But for the remarkable circumstances which led to the finding of this bird, I should never have surely known that I had shot him.

Rules for shooting are of value, and directions founded on theory may serve to inform the beginner why he misses and thus show him the way to improvement in his marksmanship; but no matter how well we may know *how* the shooting should be done, *to do it* is an art which can be attained only by the assiduous cultivation and development of certain peculiar natural gifts.

A beginner who, out of three shots can bring one Bob White to bag, need not be discouraged or ashamed; with sufficient practice, he may one day kill one out of two birds

fired at. The sportsman who does not select his shots (and no man really a sportsman can do that), but takes his chances in the open and in covert on all birds which offer a probability of success to his skill, and who, the season through, brings to his bag three out of five birds fired at, is an accomplished sportsman. If he can make three successful shots out of four, he is a phenomenal marksman.

Last season, I shot with the best wing-shot I ever hunted with. At my request, this gentleman, Mr. H. K. B. Davis, of Philadelphia, has written for me the following statement; which, coming from one who has had such unusual opportunities in hunting Bob White, in North Carolina, cannot fail to be of interest to all sportsmen:

"I find, on referring to my record containing the number of coveys found and the number of birds killed, that the average is but little over three birds brought to bag from each covey flushed. When it is remembered that the usual number of birds found in a covey runs from ten to eighteen, it will give some idea of the difficulties to be overcome, and the large proportion of birds that escape even with good shooting, as the same record shows that seventy-three out of every hundred birds shot at were brought to bag. This record, extending over four years and running up into the thousands of birds killed, gives very reliable data to base calculations upon.

"The dogs I hunted with I have every reason to believe are above the average in speed, endurance, and scenting powers; so there is only one conclusion to arrive at, and that is that these birds are exceedingly difficult both to find and to kill.

"There are many opinions as to the proper method of shooting on the wing. Some hold that 'snap-shooting' is the only way to shoot successfully. Snap-shooting is generally understood to consist in putting the gun to the shoulder and firing the instant it is in position; making the allowance to the right, left, under, or above, as the case may require, before raising the gun; just as you point your finger, instinctively, to any object without having to sight along it. Others are just as sure that no one ever shot decently unless he followed the bird with the sight on the gun and covered it before firing. Some, again, insist that you must swing your gun along with the course of the bird after pulling the trigger. In my opinion, every one who has shot very much acquires a style peculiar to himself, and depending on his temperament and the kinds of birds he has had the most practice on.

"It may be well to give a few hints as to the necessary allowance to be made in taking aim at a bird flying so rapidly as Bob White. The most difficult shot is a bird coming directly toward you, and flying about twenty feet above the ground. I have been quite successful in this shot, by holding directly at the bird until he is within range, and then, just as I touch the trigger, I raise the muzzle of the gun about six inches. I would only advise trying this shot where there is more than one bird, and you want to use the second barrel. When there is only one incoming bird, wait until he passes over you, and then by shooting under him, more or less, according to the speed and elevation at which he is flying, you will be pretty sure to kill.

"In cross shots, at thirty yards and over, hold above the line of flight and from six to nine feet ahead of the bird. This may seem entirely too much, but I have frequently shot Bob White when flying parallel

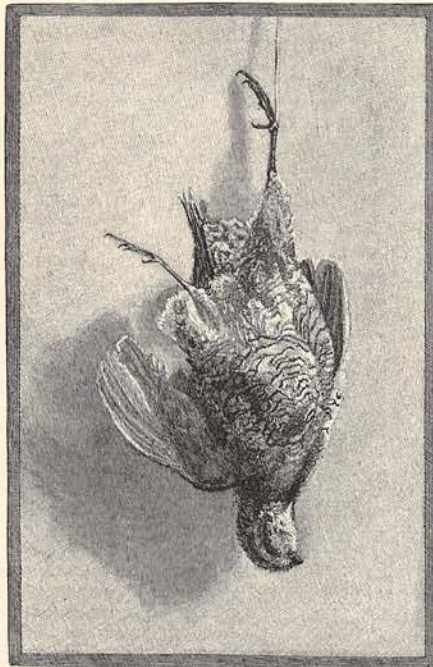
to a rail-fence, when I aimed the full length of the rail ahead of him, this being nearly twelve feet."

The shooting of Bob White demands such quick action in handling the gun, and such long tramps to discover his retreats, that I would advise light guns for his pursuit. A pound more in weight will be felt in the afternoon of a long day's hunt, and the rapidity and ease with which a light and short gun can be handled, makes it very efficient in snapshooting in covert. A twelve-gauge seven-pound gun, of twenty-eight-inch barrels, carrying one ounce of No. 8 shot and three drams of powder, or a sixteen-gauge of six

pounds weight and twenty-six-inch barrels, charged with seventh-eighths of an ounce of shot and two and three-quarter drams of powder, is to my liking in this most enjoyable of field sports; in which occupation may next season find you, my sportsman reader, when,

"Full of the expected sport, your heart beats high
As, with impatient steps, you haste to reach
The stubbles where the scattered grain affords
A sweet repast to the yet heedless game.
Near yonder hedge-row where high grass and ferns
The secret hollow shade, your pointers stand.
How beautiful they look! With outstretched tails,
With heads immovable and eyes fast fixed,
One fore-leg raised and bent, the other firm,
Advanced forward, presses on the ground."

Alfred M. Mayer.



—♦♦♦—
THY WILL BE DONE.

Blow on, fierce tempest, blow!
Pour down thy drenching rain,
Flash thy red lightning's glow,
O'er trembling land and main,—
I, but an humble lily of the field,
Resistless to thy swinging furies yield,
Let without pause or stay
All bonds and fetters burst,
Wild winds and torrents sway,
Wreak on my head their worst!

What though they snap and drown
Blossom and branch and root,
Wither and blast far down
Fair bud and tender shoot,—
From my crushed, broken heart may still rise up,
Like incense from a shivered golden cup,
A last faint breath to Heaven,
Left without star or sun,—
He took what He had given,
Thy will, my God, be done!

Stuart Sterne.