

him from his sleep—the burden, but not the drama, of nightmare—a mere formless horror, which they had to shape and recognize for themselves.

It grew less and less as the time passed, and when his orders came to report for duty at Washington they had strength for the parting. He supposed that he was to be sent to sea again, but he found that he was to be put in charge for the present of the revenue cutter for provisioning the light-houses on the Rhode Island coast; and when removed from this service, he was appointed to a post in the Narragansett Navy Yard. It is there that Helen still finds her home, in a little house overlooking the bay, on the height behind the vast sheds, in which two frigates of obsolete model, begun in Polk's time, are slowly rotting on the stocks, in a sort of emblematic expression of the present formidable character of the American navy.

In the meantime, Fenton is subject to be ordered away at any moment upon other duty; but till his orders come he rests with Helen in as much happiness as can fall to

the share of people in a world of chance and change. The days of their separation have already faded into the incredible past; and if her experience ever had any peculiar significance to her, it is rapidly losing that meaning. She remains limited in her opinions and motives by the accidents of tradition and circumstance that shape us all; at the end she is neither more nor less than a lady, as she was at the beginning. She has acquired no ideals of woman's work or woman's destiny; she is glad to have solved in the old way the problems that once beset her; and in all that has happened she feels as if she had escaped rather than achieved. She is the same, and yet not quite the same, for one never endures or endeavors to one's self alone; she keeps her little prejudices, but she has accumulated a stock of exceptions to their application; her sympathies, if not her opinions, have been enlarged; and above all, her unconsciousness has been trained to meet bravely and sweetly the duties of a life which she is content should never be splendid or ambitious.

THE END.

SNIFE-SHOOTING.

THE Wilson's snipe is, in habits and appearance, very unlike his near relative the woodcock. While the latter is a rather heavily built, thick-set bird,—stocky, so to speak,—the snipe is much more slim and elegant in form. It is much smaller, too, weighing only about four ounces. It very closely resembles the jack snipe of Europe,—whence its usual appellation, "English,"—of which it is, according to the present views of ornithologists, only a variety (*Gallinago media Wilsoni*). In length it almost equals its cousin, already referred to, measuring from nine to eleven inches. The crown of the head is black, with a median stripe of cream color, the neck speckled with brown and gray, back variegated with black, reddish brown, and tawny, the latter forming longitudinal stripes on the inner long feathers of the shoulders. The tail is barred with black, white, and chestnut brown, the sides are waved with dusky, and the lower breast and belly are white. The bill is dark, and the feet and legs are pale greenish.

This species has a very wide distribution, and is found throughout the whole continent. It only insists on moist feeding-grounds, and so may be taken on the borders of streams and about the sloughs of the Western plains,

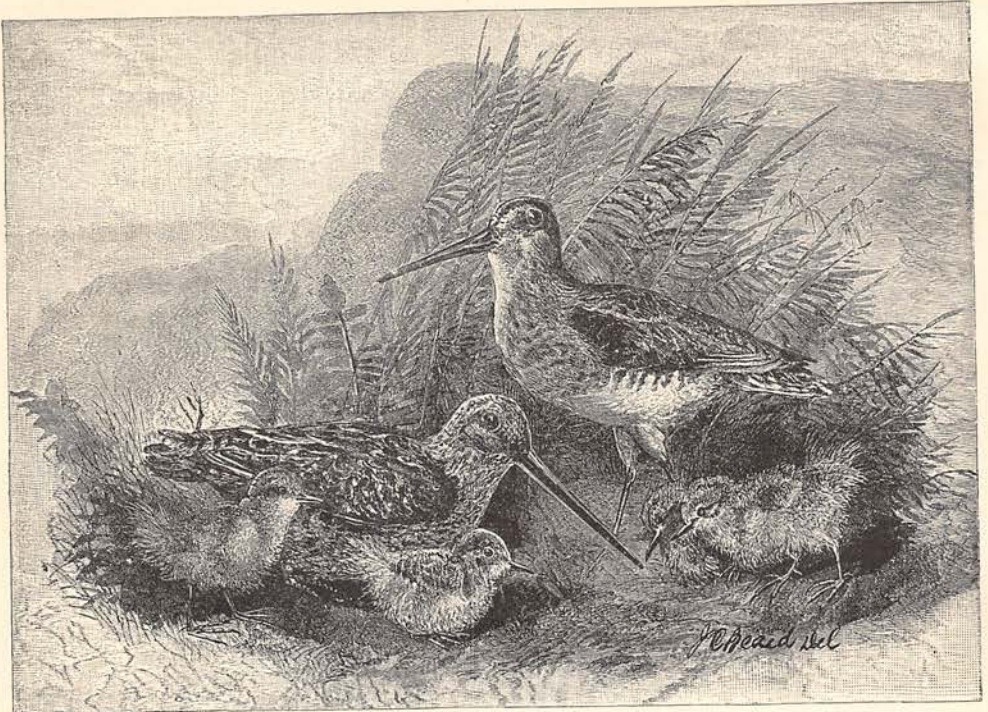
around the edges of the alkaline lakes of the great central plateau of the Rocky Mountains, and in the marshes and along the river bottoms of California, as well as in the East and the Mississippi valley.

It passes the winter in the Gulf States, where at that season it is extremely abundant, and begins its northward migration early in February. By the last of that month it has reached the marshes of North Carolina, and sometimes Virginia; and it usually makes its appearance in New Jersey and New York about the last of March or the first of April, though the date of its arrival depends almost entirely on the weather, and the consequent condition of its feeding-grounds. As long as the meadows are ice-bound it is useless to look for snipe; but as soon as the frost has come out of the ground, especially if the last thaw be followed by a soft, warm rain, the shooter may, with some prospect of success, visit the little spots of wet land, or the more extensive marshes, where his experience of former years tells him that the birds are likely to be found. At this time of the year they do not tarry long; but the places of those which pass on are at once filled by later comers, who are in turn

replaced by others, so that snipe are usually found in greater or less abundance until after the first of May.

This species does not ordinarily breed

bare they leave such retreats and at once repair to the open. Sometimes, too, when persistently pursued on the marshes, they will take refuge among woods or even in dry and



A WILSON'S SNIFE FAMILY. (FROM SPECIMENS IN THE COLLECTION OF DR. E. B. WHITINGHAM, MOUNTED BY DAVID B. DICKERSON.)

with us in any considerable numbers, most of the birds passing the season of reproduction north of the United States line. Still, many rear their broods in the State of Maine, and their nests have been found in Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and even further south. The nest is built on the high ground near some wet meadow,—or sometimes on a dry one if a tiny brook murmurs through the grass near at hand,—and is even of slighter construction than that of the woodcock, being little more than a depression in the ground lined with a few blades of grass. Four pointed eggs are laid in this, yellowish-olive in color, thickly spotted with black and dark amber. The young leave the nest as soon as they are hatched and follow the mother, or, as the naturalists would say, they are præcocial.

The snipe is essentially a bird of the open, and is rarely found in cover. Occasionally in the spring, when a late fall of snow occurs after the birds have come on, covering for a day or two the meadows where they feed, they may be found in alder or willow swamps near their usual haunts, probing the mud about the warm springs where the snow has melted; but as soon as the ground is again

dusty corn-fields, but will only remain there for a few hours.

The favorite feeding-grounds of the snipe are fresh meadows where the ground is always moist and the soil rich. One can tell as soon as he steps on the meadow whether the birds have recently been here, for in the cattle paths or in places where the hogs have been rooting, or on the bare side of a tussock where no grass grows, the soil will be perforated by numerous tiny holes, showing where the bill has been inserted in the mud in the search for food. The presence of high grasses or reeds may sometimes keep the birds away from marshes to which they would resort in numbers if it were not for the luxuriance of the vegetation. They do not like to alight among such thick cover, and besides, they cannot easily get at the ground. It is therefore customary, in the early spring before their arrival, to burn over such tracts, and places that have been treated in this way are favorite resorts for the travelers.

At present the Wilson's snipe is shot at all times and seasons, and has no protection under the law. The result of this unwise destruction is clearly seen in the greatly dimin-

ished numbers of the birds which annually visit our more accessible meadows. If a female snipe, killed in April or May, be dissected, she will be found to contain eggs in an advanced stage of development, varying in size from a marble to an egg nearly ready for exclusion. Many of the birds are paired long before they leave us in spring. They certainly should not be shot at this season, just as they are about to rear their young. Snipe-shooting in autumn is much more satisfactory, and the birds appear to be more numerous than in the spring, because at this season their feeding-grounds are more contracted, and they concentrate on the meadows that are always wet, and about ponds and marshes which have margins of black mud, in which they delight to bore. The prospect of finding them is thus much better than when they are dispersed over a much greater area.

The main body of the snipe leave us by the latter part of November, but a few prolong their stay into December, lingering as long as their feeding-grounds remain open. As with the woodcock, the cold is only indirectly the cause of their departure; the impossibility of their longer obtaining food being the immediate motive which drives them south. On the Laramie Plains, where in winter the temperature falls sometimes to -30° and even -40° Fahrenheit, a few snipe are to be found throughout the winter, about certain warm springs which never freeze.

Few of our birds are so poor in local names as this one, for it is almost everywhere known either as the "English" or the "jack" snipe. Along the New England coast, however, it has an appellation which is rather curious. As the bird arrives about the same time as the shad, and is found on the meadows along the rivers where the nets are hauled, the fishermen, when drawing their seines at night, often start it from its moist resting-place, and hear its sharp cry as it flies away through the darkness. They do not know the cause of the sound, and from the association they have dubbed its author the "shad spirit."

The snipe is either a bird of weak mind, deplorably vacillating in character, or else he is much more shrewd and profound than any one thinks. At all events, he is notorious among sportsmen for two characteristics, denoting either high intelligence or lamentable indecision:

Most birds when they rise from the ground appear to have some definite idea of the direction in which they wish to go, and having started in a particular line of flight, keep to it, unless turned by some alarming apparition before them. Not so with the snipe, how-

ever. He springs from the ground uttering his curious squeaking cry, darts a few yards one way, changes his mind, and turns almost at right angles to his original course; then he appears to think he has made a mistake, and once more alters his direction, and so twists off, "angling" across the meadow until he is safely out of gunshot. He then either rises high in the air and swings about for a while, looking for a desirable spot to alight, or else settles down into a straight, swift course, which he keeps up until his fright is over, or he has come to a spot which is to his liking, when he throws himself to the earth, and with a peculiar toss of his wings checks his progress and alights. The eccentric zigzag flight of this species is very puzzling to many sportsmen; and some who are capital shots at other birds appear never to be able to calculate the movements of the snipe. The secret of success in killing these birds consists, we believe, in great quickness,—that is, in wasting no time in an attempt to follow their flight, but in pulling the trigger at the moment the gun is on the object. The peculiar cry which is uttered at short intervals during its flight is sometimes extremely irritating, especially after one has missed with both barrels. What appeared when first heard to be only an expression of fright, or a call of warning to its companions, sounds to the disappointed shooter, as it comes back to him more and more faintly from the distance, very much like a note of derision.

The other characteristic for which the snipe is noted is the eccentricity and irregularity of its arrival and stay with us during the migrations. That snipe are "uncertain birds" is a proposition which has universal acceptance among those who shoot over the wet meadows. As a rule, more dependence is to be placed on their coming in the fall than in the spring. But even in autumn they cannot be counted upon. Sometimes they arrive singly, or a few at a time, and those which are killed to-day are at once replaced by others; or again, for a week or two at a time, the meadows may be worked over without starting a bird, and then all at once they will be found in great numbers, and will then as suddenly and as completely disappear. A piece of ground which at evening affords splendid sport, may be visited at dawn next day, and it will be found that the birds which were there have all departed. Happy is the man, therefore, who finds the snipe plenty, and he is wise who shall take advantage of the present opportunity. The advice, *Carpe diem*, applies with more force to snipe-shooting than it does to a good many others of the affairs of life.

As early as the last of August, an occa-

sional snipe may be found on the meadows; but it is not until the latter part of September that the migrants begin to arrive in any numbers. They are now in good order—often very fat—and are lazy, and lie well to a dog



EGG OF WILSON'S SNIPE.

if the weather is right. The pleasantest time to shoot them is during the warm days of October and November.

At such a time the birds are loath to rise, and will permit the dog to approach quite close to them before taking wing. On dark, cloudy days, on the other hand, especially if the wind be high, there is no such thing as getting a point on them, for they will rise at a distance of thirty or forty yards, and often the flight of the first one and his sharp *skeap, skeap* will be the signal for every snipe on the meadow to rise into the air and circle around for five or ten minutes before pitching down again. In such weather as this the only chance of getting within shot of them is to work down the wind,—thus reversing the usual order of things in shooting,—and to keep the dog close in. Snipe always rise against the wind, and by advancing on them with it at your back, they are forced to fly toward you for some little distance, thus giving you an opportunity to get a shot at them at fair range.

Where birds are scarce a good dog is invaluable, because of the amount of laborious walking that he saves the shooter; but there are times and places where a dog is very much in the way. Such are some of our Western snipe grounds, marshes where these birds are sometimes so abundant that they rise from the ground a dozen at a time, and where, perhaps for hours, the sound of their bleating cry is heard almost continually. Under such circumstances a dog is only an annoyance; for the ground is so foiled by the scent of the many birds that have run over it that the poor animal is confused, and is constantly false-pointing and wasting his master's time. Here the only use to which the dog can be put is that of retrieving. There are some cunning old dogs that, when they

find such a condition of things existing, will come in to heel without orders, and pay no further attention to the birds which are rising around them, only occupying themselves with the securing of those that may be shot.

This bird does not give forth a strong scent, and as it is often very little disposed to lie well, a dog of unusual keenness of nose, as well as caution and steadiness, is required in its pursuit. A very faint scent should be enough to cause him to stop until his master has come up to him, and he should then draw on very carefully until, if it will wait, he can locate his bird. There are days, to be sure, when snipe will permit the dog to get his nose within a few inches of them, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

It is always a convenience, however, to have a retriever with one while snipe-shooting, for without considerable practice it is not easy to mark down the dead bird so accurately that you can walk direct to it. This becomes especially difficult when several birds rise together, or nearly so, and you shoot first one and then another, and then perhaps try to mark down the remainder of the whisp. You have a general idea of the direction in which the first one fell, and are sure that the second dropped close by a certain little bunch of grass; but when, after having strained your eyes after the living and marked them down, you turn your attention to the dead, you are likely to find yourself somewhat perplexed. You see now that there are a dozen little bunches of grass near where the second bird fell, any one of which may be that by which you marked him; and as for the first, you feel very hopeless about being able to go within twenty yards of where it dropped. So you may lose half an hour of valuable time in searching for the dead. Practice in marking and a quick eye will, after a while, enable you to retrieve your own birds successfully. As a matter of fact there is always something—a bunch of grass, a bit of drift stuff, a flower, a leaf, or a weed stalk—near your bird, which is unlike anything else close to it; and you must see this object, whatever it is, and remember it, in the instant's glance that you have. Of course some birds will be lost,—that is inevitable; but it is wonderful to see how, by practice, the memory and the eye can be trained in a matter of this kind.

The snipe, although often very wary, appears to be quite devoid of that cunning which distinguishes so many of our game birds. When wounded it rarely attempts to hide, but either runs off quietly in a straight course, or, if only wing-tipped, springs again and again into the air in its attempts to fly

and constantly utters its singular squeak of fright.

There is one feature of snipe-shooting which makes it very attractive, and this is that you have your dog constantly within sight; you can see all his graceful movements and enjoy his intelligent efforts to find the birds,—to locate without flushing them. To our notion, more than half the pleasure of field shooting of any description is derived from seeing the dog work, and this can be done better on the open snipe meadows than under almost any other circumstances. Beating for snipe, however, is usually, from the nature of the ground, very laborious work. The walking is often through mud and water up to the knees, or perhaps one is obliged to pick his way through an unusually soft marsh, springing from tussock to tussock, with every prospect of tumbling, now and then, from those unsteady resting places into mire of unknown depth. This mode of progression requires some muscular exertion and constant attention; and besides this, the dog must be constantly watched, and unexpected birds, which he may have passed by, must be shot at and marked down.

It is, therefore, essential that the snipe-shooter should carry no extra weight. His gun should be light, and his cartridges need not hold more than an ounce of No. 12 shot; for this bird is easily killed, and as it is so small, and often rises at a considerable distance, it is important that as many of the

leaden pellets as possible should be sent after it. Rubber boots reaching to the hip are of course necessary, and the clothing should be gray or brown in color—inconspicuous, at all events. The places in which the snipe are found are often resorted to by some species of our ducks as well. The little pools and creeks, which are sure to be found in extensive snipe marshes, furnish food for the blue and green winged teal, the black duck, mallard, baldpate, and woodduck. It will, therefore, be advisable for one who is about to visit such grounds to put in his pocket half a dozen cartridges, loaded with three and a half drams of powder, and an ounce of No. 8 shot; for although No. 12 may prove effective against the ducks at short range, it is well to be prepared for longer shots.

As between woodcock and English snipe, the preference would be given with but few dissenting voices to the larger bird. Snipe-shooting, from the erratic movements of the bird, is something that cannot be depended on, while if the conditions of weather and feeding-grounds are favorable, one may count with some certainty at the proper season on having sport with the woodcock. As regards delicacy of flavor, there is nothing to choose between the two. For birds so nearly related they are wonderfully unlike in appearance and habits, and the snipe is certainly much better able to take care of himself than his rusty-coated cousin.

George Bird Grinnell.

AT TWILIGHT.

I WONDER if I love thee yet—but oh!
 I love thee not as once. . . . The eyes are clear
 That vexed my heart then with their ready tear,
 The voice is glad and full that faltered so
 When thou and I loosed hands long years ago.
 Those outward signs are changed; but, musing here
 'Neath the broad spaces of the twilight sphere,
 Rapt thoughts of thee rise in my heart and glow,
 And every wiser deed or tenderer mood
 Of mine appears a heritage of good,
 A clear reflection of the daylight gone,—
 Dear, vanished day, that was my Orient
 Of strength and purity and deep content,
 Restful as mountains, solemn as the dawn!

Edna Dale.