

THE SPORTSMAN'S MUSIC.



BOB WHITE.

NO sportsman worthy of the name is ignorant of the calls of the various game birds; and no sportsman who makes an art of his recreation and is ambitious to succeed is unable to imitate those calls with telling effect. Game birds are not silly noddy-birds that sit to be shot at, and the hunter's skill and ingenuity must be exercised to bring them within his reach. Many species of birds, wonderfully shy, when once startled by a shot, will take wing and fly to great distances, making it impracticable for any sportsman made of human clay to follow them. A knowledge of their calls often enables him to entice them back, and to get shot after shot until he proudly carries away as trophies of his skill the whole assembly. Perhaps there is little love of nature in this; but no sportsman will deny that his knowledge of the language of the birds has made him more profoundly conscious of the beauties of the world in which he lives. In the summer season the quail is filled with domestic dreams, and is engaged in watching the growth of his downy family under the protection of his beautiful mate. At that season of the year the quail's voice is rich and mellow. It has all the full, rounded sweetness of the flute-note mingled with the penetrating, tender quality of the oboe. A musician who thoroughly understood the value of the modern tonalities, who is keen to perceive the key in which an air was pitched, would say at once that the three notes of which this call is composed were suggestive of boldness and triumph as well as of love; that they were certainly the song of a proud, happy, and affectionate father.

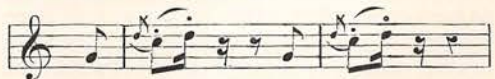
At first thought the mind flashes to the conclusion that so beautiful a call should be

easily expressed in the notation commonly used for music. But there is nothing in nature that resembles music. The succession of sustained sounds which composes a melody is not heard. The peculiarity of the songs of all birds is that they never sustain notes. There is a constant *portamento*, or sliding of the sound, which blends one note into another, just as is done in human conversation, making a succession that may be pleasing, but is not melody. The Rev. Mr. Haweis, in his interesting book, "Music and Morals," says: "What has she [nature] done for the musician? She has given him sound, not music. Nowhere does there fall upon his ear, as he walks through the wide world, such an arrangement of consecutive sounds as can be called a musical subject, or theme, or melody. . . . The cuckoo, who often sings a true third, and sometimes a sharp third or even a fourth, is the nearest approach to music in nature." This being the case, it is with a profound sense of the impossibility of doing justice to the call of the quail — or that of any other bird — in musical notes that I here write his summer song in the common notation, as well as I can give it:

Allegro mod.



In the winter, when the birds are full-grown and are gathered in coveys, when the hunting season has begun, you will hear another and equally beautiful call from the quail. After your intelligent dog has pointed, and you have flushed the covey and flashed out your message of destruction to the brown ranks, the birds will scatter in every direction. For a long time there will be silence, and you will wonder what has become of the quail. Be patient, and soon you will hear the splendid bugle-call of the leader as he sounds what may be called the "assembly." It is the summons by which the scattered birds are informed of the chosen rendezvous for the covey. It is similar to the other in some respects. Here it is in musical notation:



This call the quail continues *ad libitum*. The summer call is only given once, when an interval of silence always follows. This second call is sharper and more metallic in tone than



YELLOW-LEGS.

the other, though it is given at about the same tempo, a moderate allegro. I know of no instrument upon which these calls can be performed except that somewhat vulgar one known as the "human whistle." The flute and clarinet cannot give the blending effect, which, as I have said, is never absent from bird-calls. The violin can attain this, of course, but it has not the proper quality of tone. The human whistle, however, can imitate this and all other bird-whistles with such finish as to deceive the bird himself. The writer knows one or two sportsmen who, after shooting into a flushed covey of quail, wait a short time, and then begin whistling the "assembly." They rarely fail to collect the birds at a short distance from them, and thus save much walking. In the summer the quail is much less wild than in the winter, and the writer has frequently enticed one across a ten-acre field by simply answering him every time he sounded his "Ah, Bob White."

Next to the quail's, perhaps the most striking call is the clear, penetrating whistle of the yellow-leg snipe. In the month of September, when the sedges and mud flats are rich in those morsels that tempt the appetites of all the *gallinago* family; when after some easterly storm you will see dowitches and sand-pipers, curlews and willets, killdeer and ring-necked plover whirling through the misty air in wild confusion,—then you will hear the resonant notes of the yellow-leg echoing clear above all the other calls of the snipe. The eager sportsman is lying concealed behind his "blind" of brush and marsh grass, with his gun poised, ready for action. In front of him are spread out his decoys, standing each on its one wooden leg in the shallow water. Soon the yellow-legs, whose shrill notes have been heard, come swooping down toward the counterfeit birds. Just as they are about to "pitch," the sportsman fires both barrels in rapid succession into the thickest part of the wisp. Three or four birds fall dead, one or two more are hopelessly wounded, and the rest

sail away at a rapid pace. The moment he has fired the sportsman begins to whistle, imitating as nearly as he can the call of the birds. If he is expert and knows how to make the notes reach to a distance, he will soon see the fleeing wisp of snipe whirl around and come back in his direction.

But it is when the gunner is hunting for English snipe or Virginia rail and has no decoys with him that he has an opportunity to try his skill as a yellow-leg whistler. He is watching the sagacious movements of his dog, when suddenly, clear as the notes of a silver flute, the call of the yellow-leg drops from the sky. With a word the dog is called in to heel, and the sportsman sinks into the tall reeds. Then he begins to whistle. The snipe replies. The gunner answers him again. The bird slowly circles over the water, gradually dropping lower and frequently whistling. Suddenly he pauses in the middle of his circular flight, and, throwing up his tail, descends almost perpendicularly and with startling rapidity toward an inviting point of mud. Within a few feet of the earth two or three quick flaps of the wings break his fall; and the next moment you will see him standing erect and alert, his keen eyes glancing in every direction, as if wondering where the other snipe can be. Now the wise sportsman stops trying to imitate the bird's call, and devotes his attention to approaching within gunshot. He takes a roundabout course, bending low behind the reeds, until he has come to within thirty-five yards of the snipe. Then he rises up and boldly walks forward at a rapid gait. The bird is so startled that for a moment he sits motionless gazing at his approaching enemy. The gunner has gained four or five yards before the bird is up and off. The yellow-leg is an easy bird to hit and dies quickly, so that the man who approaches to within thirty-five yards gets a good shot. I give, as nearly as I can, the call of the yellow-leg in musical notes:



UPLAND PLOVER.



MEADOW LARK.

Closely akin to this call is that of the upland or grass plover. This splendid game bird haunts the grassy fields, where the openness of the ground is his protection. He is wild at all times and can rarely be approached without resort to artifice of some kind. In some parts of the country it is customary to hunt plover with a horse and wagon, as the birds will permit a vehicle to advance within easy distance of them. From this mere hint at their wildness one would say that the imitation of their call is of little value. So it is for the purpose of enticing birds to come within gunshot a second time. But I have known an expert old gunner, well hidden in marsh grass, to whistle a plover down into the meadows, beside a pond, when the bird was apparently bound for a more distant point. There is, however, another use to which the clever whistler may turn his talent. On some moonlight night in August, when you are standing on the piazza of your cottage by the sea down in New Jersey, when you are trying to count the glittering ripples that dance along the track of the moonbeams, suddenly you will hear dropping out of the clear, starry sky that wonderful bell-like call, so short, sharp, and tremulous that it thrills the bosom of the sportsman. If you can imagine some instrument which would combine all the qualities of flute and a silver bell, like the famous "Carolus" at Antwerp, then you can conceive the exquisite purity of tone which is the chief characteristic of the plover's call. The old sportsman who hears it in an August night knows at once that the plover are beginning to hasten southward. He will stand upon his piazza and imitate it as best he can,—no man can do it perfectly,—and the result will often be that he will call down some of the passing birds into the neighboring fields, where, if he will rise before the sun, he will find them in the cool, gray dawn. The melody of the plover's call is precisely the same as that of the yellow-leg snipe. It consists

usually, however, of only three pairs of notes, given out with such shortness and rapidity as to sound almost like a trill. Careful attention will analyze the call into something like this:



The difficulty of imitating the yellow-leg's call is great, but imitating this one is so much more difficult that very few sportsmen ever attain anything like proficiency. Another pretty and somewhat plaintive call is that of the spotted sandpiper, commonly known as the "teeter." The value of this call to the gunner is very small, as the bird can be reached without enticing him, and is a sorry specimen of game when obtained. Still, the call is so peculiar that I have often amused myself by carrying on a monotonous conversation with these wee birds in their own limited language. Here is the call:



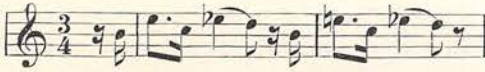
To give it anything like its proper effect, it should be made as shrill as possible,—the notes having a peculiar thinness,—and each tone should slide upward nearly a half-tone at the end. This wearisome peeping may be heard in the summer-time along the banks of small streams where the birds build their nests. The woodcock, too, has a call, although it is seldom heard. It consists of a rapid but faint twittering uttered by the bird just before he springs into flight. Few sportsmen are so fortunate as to approach near enough to the bird to hear it. This call it is absolutely impossible to express in musical notation.

A bird which has a charmingly sweet and plaintive call is the meadow-lark. This bird does not belong to the family of game, nor can he be coaxed near the gunner by imitating his call. In many parts of the country

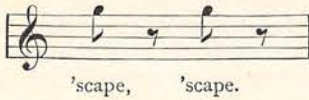


ENGLISH SNIFE.

where game is scarce, this bird is eagerly sought by hunters, as his flesh is white and tender, and he has a straight, rapid flight, which makes him capital practice for a quail-shooter. His call, which is exceedingly strong and can be heard for a long distance, has a pretty rocking motion that makes it very pleasant to hear on a summer morning. This is it:



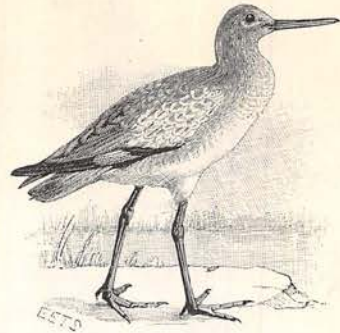
The English snipe has a call which is only heard when the bird is startled and springs into flight. This call is not a whistle, but an unmusical squeak. It resembles in sound the syllable 'scape! 'scape! Written in musical notes it would be something like this:



VIRGINIA RAIL.

The bird when rising rarely utters this cry more than once, occasionally twice. I do not know that it is ever heard more than twice.

The Virginia rail, a bird which sportsmen along the New Jersey coast are fond of shooting, has a call which is musical and peculiar. The birds are not killed in great numbers, but afford excellent sport. If you happen to be on the New Jersey coast about the middle of September, throw a stone into the calamus reeds at the head of some pond. If any rail are there, you will hear a faint cry of "kek, kek." You can imitate this cry by playing *pizzicato* or plucking with your finger on the D string of a violin below the bridge. As nearly as it can be given in musical notation, it is like this:

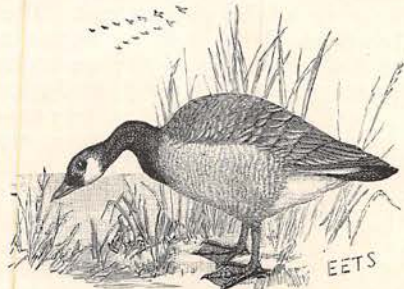


WILLET.

The willet, a member of the snipe family, has a call or note which may be easily imitated, and is often effective in recalling the bird when he appears to be on his way to the ends of the earth. Mr. J. L. Bright told the writer of the peculiar manner in which he discovered the willet's call, and how he immediately used it with good results. Some years ago, when good sport could be found at Long Branch, Mr. Bright was shooting snipe on the beach near the outlet of a small pond. He was shooting from a blind over decoys, in the usual manner. The weather was misty, and there was a strong south-easterly wind. Suddenly five willet came out of the pond, passing immediately over Mr. Bright's head at no great height. They were out of gunshot before he had time to recover from his astonishment. As they passed over him, however, he heard them uttering a sound which was easily imitated. He produced the same sound at once, without much hope of making the birds hear it or of its having any effect. The birds, however, did hear it, circled about, and came back within easy gunshot, when he killed three of them. The sound was a combination of humming and whistling. If you will take a medium note, such as this,



and hum it and whistle it as loudly as possible, both at the same time, you will produce



CANADA GOOSE.

the sound by which the willet betrayed themselves to Mr. Bright.

There is one more splendid call of which I wish to speak. It is the honk of the Canada goose. On a drizzly October day, when the ducks are migrating southward in great flocks, you will suddenly hear that weird, unnatural, and powerful cry. It rings out above the rushing of the wind with a clarion peal that goes straight to the sportsman's heart. Perhaps, as a musician, the writer ought to say that the call of the goose, being a major ninth, is harsh and discordant; but considered as a part of the wintry and often tempestuous weather which the bird seems to love, I cannot look upon it as anything but singularly harmonious and appropriate. Unfortunately for the goose, it can be imitated to perfection, and the unhappy birds frequently meet their end by paying too much heed to its deceptive notes. One instance of peculiar interest has come to the writer's knowledge. The destroyers in this case were Captain Walter S. Green, of Life Saving Station No. 5, Long Branch, and Mr. Bright, who has been before mentioned. These two shooters live on opposite sides of a large pond, and are on the constant watch for birds of any kind that may come in from the sea to rest. Early one morning Mr. Bright heard a distant but vigorous honking. He soon saw a flock of seven geese flying in toward the pond. Quickly getting his gun and some heavy cartridges, he hastened down to the edge of the pond, keeping himself hidden behind a heavy hedge. As soon as he had selected his position, he uttered a vigorous honk, to which the leader of the incoming flock responded. Flying low, they sailed majestically in over the opposite shore, a hundred and fifty yards away from Mr. Bright. They were evidently weary, and anxious to settle down in the smooth waters

of the pond. Suddenly out of the tall marsh grass on the shore opposite Mr. Bright, two puffs of blue smoke and two booming reports rolled out. The leader of the flock folded his wings and fell to the ground dead. Mr. Bright then knew for the first time that Captain Green was at hand. The birds swerved from their course and flew toward Mr. Bright, who easily killed the second bird. Both he and Captain Green did not cease honking, and the birds, after going away to a considerable distance, sailed back again, passing over Mr. Bright's head at some height. With his heavy gun he killed two of them, when they circled and swept across the pond, where Captain Green killed two more. The remaining bird, which had been wounded by scattering shot, made a hard struggle to rise to a safe height. Captain Green hastily slipped in a cartridge and took a long shot. A few feathers fell from the bird, and he flew across the pond. Mr. Bright then got a long shot at him, breaking his wing and bringing him down.

The call of the goose can be imitated by giving the first note in a hoarse, guttural tone, and the second in a strident falsetto. The notes are something like these:



Ha - - onk !

In closing it must be stated that musical characters do not perfectly represent the calls of any of the birds mentioned, but they give an approximate idea of them. It must be remembered that there is always more or less sliding or blending of tones in these calls. In that of the yellow-leg snipe, the first three or four intervals are not as great as semitones, though I have written them so because we have no smaller intervals in modern music.

W. J. Henderson.

POEMS BY SIDNEY LANIER.

THOU AND I.

SO one in heart and thought, I trow,
That thou might'st press the strings and I
might draw the bow,
And both would meet in music sweet,
Thou and I, I trow.

TWO IN ONE.

I SAID to myself
Which is I, which you ?
Myself made answer to myself,
Lo, you are I and I am you,
Yet are we twain, we two.

ONE IN TWO.

I'LL sleep, I'll sleep, and dream a sweet death for trouble ;
I'll sleep, I'll sleep, and dream that my heart beats double.

More than twice one, beyond all measure more,—
Doth count this singular two of thee and me.