

Teaching the Call of the Prairie Chicken

When Silver Cloud returned she said she was going to teach me a call, and when she heard my signal she would come and play with me. The call she chose was that of the prairie chicken, the plaintive call of the lost signaling to join their flock. Our signal consisted of five calls with timed intervals. Our first call was single with a five space interval. Between it and the second call, that is the time it took one to take five steps. The second call was three straight calls without interval, and the last signal the same as the first. Then single calls every fifty paces when locating each other in the woods.

In those pioneer days prairie chickens were so plentiful one could hear them calling almost any time during the day, so that is the reason we had to have a distinct signal, and it was also confusing to my brothers for they did not become suspicious. After teaching me for several hours Silver Cloud said I had learned the call perfectly.

A Proficient Teacher

It was not long until I found that Silver Cloud was a capable instructor at teaching the plaintive call of the lost prairie chicken. It was one day my mother told me to take a bucket and go to the woods and pick her some saskatoons. When I reached the thicket where the berries grew I sent Silver Cloud our signal. But I got no response and after sending several calls I knew she was not at the tepee and beyond the sound of my voice, so I started to pick berries alone, but had just got nicely started when to my surprise I saw Grey Eagle through the thicket not more than fifty yards away. He was stalking through the wild pea vine that fringed the edge of the woods, his long single barreled muzzle-loading shotgun against his shoulder ready to shoot at the prairie chickens when they flew.