

six of the one and half a dozen of the other.

Spring shooting is an abomination, and I believe that most sportsmen would be willing to forego it, if only the other fellows could be made to stop too, yet it must be conceded that, in the west, the big bags of snipe are best picked up in the month of April. A few springs ago I happened to be on the prairie when the big flight of these birds came up from the Gulf states, and they were so numerous that a dog was merely a nuisance; one had only to walk, down wind, with the gun at the ready, along the bank of some young feeder of the mighty Saskatchewan. The birds were lying on the short, brown grass, and as they rose presented easy marks, so that it was quite possible to make an unusually high average of kills, much higher, in fact, than I have been able to do anywhere else except in the tropics.

But, after all, there was more slaughter but infinitely less sport than in that other shooting which I had years ago on the marshes of the Saint John. Well do I remember driving ten miles one fine September morning to try a small rushy island, which occasionally held birds. I had often picked up a few couple either on the island or the adjacent marshes, but had never done anything very wonderful. This morning, however, I was in luck, for no sooner had I stepped from the canoe than my spaniel put up a snipe, and on leaving the island I had sixteen couple, and four couple more were picked up on the main land. This was enough, in all conscience, yet I am under the impression that had I been bloodthirsty, I could, perhaps, on that occasion have rivalled the record bags made in Louisiana and in the Malay Peninsula.

Snipe shooting means snap shooting, and there is no bird which demands

greater skill, although I almost think that the snipe shooter is born and not made, because I know in my own case I could always do pretty well at this kind of shooting while I am not nearly so good at deliberate firing. Such, for instance, as duck shooting at flight time. I used to go out a good deal with an old Micmac, who looked on in astonishment, not unmingled with contempt, at the way I used to cut down the snipe, but when the time came for the evening flight of duck he could kill three birds to my two. His gun was a double ten bore muzzle loader, and the whole performance on his part was a very deliberate one; down would go the powder, then two wads, then the shot, another couple of wads, after that came the caps—and this performance was not hurried in the least because a few miserable ducks happened to have taken a mean advantage of the old man, by flying over when he could not attend to them. Not a bit of it, he would stand with his legs far apart, his gun held as in a vise, those far-seeing, old eyes of his seeming to pierce the heavens as he watched intently for an oncoming bird. Perhaps, a single black duck, perhaps a bunch, would appear, flying as if late for an engagement, and anxious to make up for lost time. The long, rusty barrels would swing slowly upward, and if the coveted bird was high up you may be sure they were held well ahead of it; the trigger was pressed, and more often than not that unfortunate duck would seem to lose all ambition and fall with a thud in the ooze.

For my own snipe shooting I should pick a hammerless twelve bore, with a very straight, long stock; thirty-inch, cylinder barrels, and of a weight, certainly, under seven pounds. A good many men use barrels shorter by two inches, but I have always imagined that I could do better with a barrel of the regulation length.

