

Few of these shepherds are teetotallers, and I believe from many years observations that just as few of them are drunkards. They like their "dram" on "gathering" days, but seldom on any occasion do they indulge to excess, except perhaps at a "fair", where once or twice a year they meet their friends, when some of them may just take a "wee drap" too much. This, I believe, is decidedly the exception, and not the rule. The jokes that we cracked that day and the old threadbare stories which had been retailed a score of times before, seemed to possess to the shepherds as much piquancy and interest as ever they did.

HOME LIFE.

The home life of the Scotch shepherd may seem to the onlooker at times to be a monotonous one, but in all fairness it cannot be described as other than a happy one. Living far away from the busy haunts of men, his wants are few; he is not racked or harassed in the whirlpool of business as the townman is, and though his work may at times be, and doubtless is, very hard, his calling is an exceptionally healthy one, and in many cases he attains a ripe old age. Two summers ago I had the very great pleasure of making the acquaintance of a worthy old gentleman—a Scotch shepherd.

Born in the year 1801, and now 105 years old, he can recount with vivid exactness his recollections of the rejoicings throughout the country to celebrate the victory of Waterloo. He is still in the full enjoyment of health and strength, both mentally and physically, can do a day's work, and enjoys his "dram" and smoke with men fifty years his junior. This may seem incredible, but it is a fact for which I can vouch.

Another striking trait in the character of the Scotch shepherd is his desire to give his children a liberal education, and to accomplish this he will frequently make heavy sacrifices. He is, moreover, a regular attendant at divine services, and I know men of this class who travel six to eight miles on foot both ways to attend church on Sabbath days as frequently as their duties permit.

VALUE TO THE NATION.

As I studied the man I could not help reflecting what a valuable asset to the nation this class of men are from a military point of view. Active, muscular, and alert, they are capable of enduring almost any hardship and fatigue. Some of them are veritable encyclopedias in explaining the cause of the movements of animals on the distant horizon, or the meaning of the flight of a bird. As I have heard them discourse on the cause of this or that, the thought occurred to me what ideal scouts these men would make in times of war, and what a thousand pitics that their numbers should be constantly lessened owing to large tracts of the Scottish Highlands being cleared of sheep, as has been the case in recent years. I have no desire to interfere with politics, but it is to be hoped that responsible parties will think twice before clearing large tracts of land of Blackface sheep, for with that short-sighted policy the shepherd goes, thereby losing to the nation one of its most valuable assets.—S. B. HOLLINGS, in *Scottish Farmer Album*.

This Teacher Adds to His Own Work.

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

In your issue of May 30 there is a letter from Mr. McDougall, the teacher at Hunt's Valley to which I had not thought of replying, but, as he has since in the *Nepawa Press* published another, partly along the same lines a clipping of which I enclose, I thought, with your permission, I would reply briefly. He accuses me with other ratepayers of colossal ignorance regarding the importance of the office of school teacher, and pictures the trustees as strutting around like peacocks clothed in a little brief authority, which Mr. McDougall would like very much to take away from them. Now regarding the teachers, like ministers' wives, they ought to be angels, but there are more men than John Wesley who has found out differently. In his letter Mr. McDougall admits there are few good teachers; my opinion of them is a good deal better than that. I am quite free to admit the importance of the office of teacher, but as regards the trustees getting the swelled head, I must say that I have never been at a school meeting yet when there was a single one present who seemed to want the job. I think the men on the ground and the parents of the children are best suited to manage the school. Mr. McDougall in his letter tells of one who thought he had signed away the deed of his farm when signing the agreement with the teacher, but he did not say that it was his own school. A teacher who preceded Mr. McDougall in this school was pretty near the whole thing—teacher, secretary-treasurer and auditor. I never heard if he was satisfied or not. I am informed on good authority that when the present incumbent wants a leave of absence all he has to do is to write out a doctor's certificate and present it to the trustees who expect it is all right and let him off.

Of course these people are mostly foreigners, yet they are the people Mr. McDougall delights to be among. I do not blame him for saying a good word for them as he has taken one of their number for better or worse, yet I do not feel under any such obligation and as we often have the teacher boarding with us I notice that they appreciate their company about as much as I do. All I said in my letter about foreigners was that it did not add to the pleasure of farming to be forced to work in uncongenial company. I expect their language will always remain a jabber to me, I am too old to learn it now and would not if I could.

This is Canada and we want the English language spoken here, so they will have to do the learning. I might just say regarding educational matters, several of your correspondents have written letters which I could endorse, and in your last issue one from Robert Fisher of Oak Bank meets my view pretty well.

GEORGE KERR.

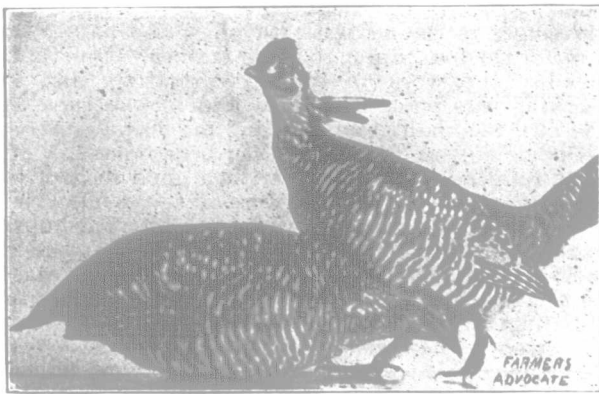
The Grouse of Manitoba.

(Continued.)

PINNATED GROUSE.

The pinnated grouse is the typical game bird of the open country, and among the birds is as characteristic of the prairies as the bison formerly was among the animals. Its range occupies the prairie regions from Manitoba to Texas, and from Eastern Ohio to Nebraska. Formerly it was very plentiful throughout Ohio and Kentucky, but today it is extremely scarce in those states and is nowhere found in large numbers east of the Mississippi. Early in the last century, Audubon wrote of it in Kentucky as being so numerous as to "enter the farmyards and feed with the poultry, alight on the houses or walk in the very streets of the villages." Now it has all but ceased to exist in Kentucky, and is getting scarce in Indiana and Illinois.

On the other hand when the first white settlers reached Minnesota and Dakota, it was only found in small numbers, and was unknown in Manitoba, where it is now more plentiful than in any other part of its habitat. The first notice of its appearance in Manitoba occurred about the year 1882. As the new country opened up settlement spread northward, transforming the broad expanses of prairie grass to leagues of golden grain, and the pinnated grouse made a corres-



PINNATED GROUSE.

pondingly northward movement, and followed the pioneer farmers from the south.

Previous to this the sharp-tailed grouse was the undisputed and only prairie chicken of the province but ever since the coming of its pinnated relative doubt and argument have existed as to which is 'chicken' and which is not. Various have been the conclusions arrived at, in an endeavor to adjust the two birds to their proper classification. Some preferred to leave the older bird as it had always been—just plain 'chicken'—and to designate the newcomer plain 'grouse', or Minnesota grouse. From this conclusion, the very prevalent and mistaken belief has arisen, that one is a grouse, and the other is not. Others facilitated matters by applying the appropriate names of sharptail and squaretail to the two varieties; and yet others, quite content with an all's-fish-that-comes-into-the-net idea have been quite content to hang them side by side under the common appellation of prairie chicken. When the two varieties come upon the table, hot, juicy and nicely brown, the latter designation is probably quite sufficient, but the fact remains and always will, that both birds are distinctly separate species of grouse, and both are equally worthy of being called prairie chicken for general purposes.

In Manitoba, the pinnated grouse discovered a new realm well adapted to its requirements. Since its first appearance it has continued to thrive and increase in the land of its adoption, and today it is recognized as one of our finest native birds. It is doubtful if man's fancy could possibly picture a grander bird than this, or one which could give more profound satisfaction in every way to the great multitude of lovers of dog and gun. Few grouse the world over can boast of superior quality. Vigorous and rugged, it is fitted to withstand the severest tests of winter's rigors. It is prolific, stout-hearted, and strong of wing; lies well to the dog and offers a comparatively easy mark to any who would seek change and recreation in the great sun-kissed land of pure air and blue skies.

And this is not all, as a destroyer of weeds and insects, it is one of the farmers best friends.

From May to October, about a third of its food consists of insects, and it takes little grain other than what remains in the stubbles after the crops are cut. It destroys more grasshoppers and locusts than any other form of insect life. During an invasion of the locust in Nebraska, Prof. Samuel Aughey found 866 of these pests in the stomachs of 16 out of 20 pinnated grouse killed*.

One of the most striking characteristics of the pinnated grouse, is its peculiar spring dancing during the mating season. Everyone living on the prairie is familiar with the hollow, booming cry of the chicken at this season, but comparatively few people avail themselves of an opportunity to witness this most interesting and strange performance. A dancing grouse is usually selected on a dry, open ridge or upland, unobstructed by brush or tall growths, the birds apparently being fully conscious of the danger entailed by their necessary lack of vigilance while fully occupied with their all absorbing business of dancing and love-making. The same dancing ground is often used year after year if undisturbed, its presence being easily located by the the scattering of feathers and other signs which accumulate upon it. On one occasion I saw a

mating dance in full swing on the outer extremity of a long piece of ice, which remained jutting far out into Shoal Lake after the spring break-up. This proved, no doubt to be an ideal spot for a most successful dance. No uninvited intruders could possibly attend without giving due notice of their coming; the sun-softened surface of the ice was most conducive to the daintiest of fantastic footwork; and at the dance floor's very edge, ample liquid refreshments were to be had for the taking. The dancing is usually carried on in the early morning and late afternoon, though sometimes it takes place at intervals throughout the day. Just as the dawn appears in the east, some old and over ambitious cock betakes himself to the chosen ground and straightway proceeds to announce the morning programme proudly strutting around and bellowing forth his hollow, far-reaching rumblings. Other aspirants for honors presently put in an appearance either singly or in twos and threes. Then come the sedate, unassuming females, and as the sun comes up above the prairie's rim and heralds in the day, the minuet is on. The booming increases in volume. At intervals, each male inflates the large, orange-colored sacks on his neck to bursting point, the wing-like feathers of the neck are erected above the head, the wings trail the ground like a strutting gobbler's, and the tail is spread fan-like above the back. Suddenly lowering his head and releasing the air from the uncanny looking appendages on his neck, the bird sends his unmusical love-song speeding over the grassy wastes, while another takes up the performance. The females sit and watch as though but half interested in the love-mad dance and the males vie with one another to be most conspicuous. Booming, chuckling, rushing madly back and forth, leaping into the air and fighting, they each in turn become subdued and scatter away across the stubbles in search of breakfast—some with newly worn mates, others to return to the tryst at sunset.

The mating season begins as soon as the snow has disappeared from the prairies, and is continued well into May. By the middle of May they are paired off and little again is seen of the birds till the young are hatched and able to fly.

During the mating season the prairie chicken has many foes to contend with. The countless number of crows who are also busily engaged in rearing their young, scour the prairies daily for food to nourish their undeserving offspring, and many a helpless chicken's brood is pillaged to provide for the gaping little cannibals in their bulky home of sticks. Another source of danger is the prairie fire. As the chicken always nests in the grasslands and usually on high ground, to escape the spring floods, its nest is in constant danger of being swept over by the fiery element. On one small ridge of a few acres, I have found the scorched eggs of five different nests which had lain in the path of a passing fire.

From twelve to fifteen eggs are laid—buff-colored, finely speckled with brown. Only one brood is usually raised in a season, though in cases where the first clutch of eggs has been destroyed, a second nest is sometimes made.

Records exist of this bird crossing with the sharptailed grouse, and I once procured a splendid specimen in the fall that showed distinctive

*Bull. 24, U. S. Dept. Agri.