

mark the first bird down, to be retrieved by the spaniel a moment later. The day has begun, and now steady ahead for the rest of the mob. Two more birds rise before the cover is reached. One turns uphill, flying high, and I record a miss with the right barrel. The second bird swings away on a long curve down the fern-clad slopes, and drops to the choke just as safety looms up in high scrub, a dozen yards ahead.

At last the dogs reach the edge of the main cover. A thick tangle of low rangiora bushes intermingled with clumps of mahoe and konini. Truly, an ideal patch for game. The dogs work into it methodically, and the shaking bush-tops denote the course they are pursuing. A strong gust of wind swoops down from the hill-crest high above with a scatter of grass stalks and dead leaves, and as it rushes by half-a-dozen quail rise on its downward swirl, and whiz past like a flash. There is no time to take aim, it is a case of snap shooting with a vengeance. Four shots ring out in rapid succession, and three of the birds pitch headlong amid clouds of feathers. A fourth sheds a few tail feathers, but skims on bravely around the corner and out of sight. Whilst the guns are being emptied of the cartridge shells three more birds dash past in safety, and then the guns speak again as another batch of seven launch themselves upon the breeze. Meanwhile, numbers of the birds are flying off up the gully, skimming low down on the scrub, and as the two dogs appear in a small open patch beyond the first cover, they are whistled back to hunt up the fallen birds.

Now comes what is to the sportsman one of the most absorbing and interesting phases of animal life. The dogs know at once what is required of them, no orders are given as they slip silently away down hill. One after another the birds are nosed out. First one that has fallen on the open hillside, then a second lying in a tangle of dead

branches. At a thick growth of thistles, Taepo sets rigidly, and hastening forward, we are in time to see him pounce upon a wounded bird. The spaniel flushes another that drops finally to a raking right barrel, and the tally is quickly completed. Eight birds for a start, each as plump and round as a cricket ball, and now uphill once more on the track of the survivors.

The scrub grows thicker as we advance, and the birds, grown wary with their previous experience, are slow at taking wing. *Moi Moi*, the spaniel, however, dislodges several of them from the low branches of the scrub by his angry yapping, and now the shooting becomes keen indeed. Uphill, downhill, and straight at us, the little slate-coloured birds dash with surprising velocity, and a considerable number of tips and misses result from these tactics. Perhaps the most difficult shot is when a cunning old cock-quail hurls himself straight at me in a most disconcerting fashion. At about five yards distance he swerves suddenly and dashes off at right angles, he certainly deserves the clean miss that results.

On the opposite side of the gully George is hard at work. First right and left, then two shots close upon one another. Next a difficult, twisting snap, almost a complete turn, and a cloud of feathers denotes a clean kill from a really splendid bit of shooting. For a while the birds break cover very reluctantly, and shooting becomes easier. There is more time to prepare, and in consequence the list of killed mounts up steadily.

At last the remaining members of the mob, some thirty birds in all, play the usual game at this stage of the proceedings by simultaneously breaking cover. This procedure is, perhaps, the most disconcerting that the sportsman is called upon to face. Nine times out of ten he loses his head, and, firing at random into the brown of the bird, records a clean miss. The proper