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A BOB-WHITE COVEY.

LYNDS JONES.

Reams of paper and pounds of ink have been consecrated to Bob-white, yet the manner in which the flock forms the bomb-shell "covey" has never been described, or if described the account has escaped my notice. Probably the fact that each flock of these birds passes the night in a compact ring, tails touching, heads pointed out, is as old as the discovery of these birds by the earliest settlers. Every "Quail" hunter has experienced the momentary terror occasioned by the bursting of this animal bomb at his feet, each bird apparently taking a separate direction, and yet the whole flock finally making off in the same general direction. He must also know that the birds do not always form this bomb whenever they see danger threaten, but when disturbed while they are feeding, they may either gather in a loose bunch, or run swiftly in a compact flock. They sometimes form this bomb even at mid-day, trusting to concealment for protection. The gathering of the flock again after being scattered is well known, but the form which the flock takes when all but the lost ones return does not seem to be known. It probably varies according to circumstances, since on one occasion I noted the formation of the bomb, but on others merely a compact flock without the bomb form.

Mr. Robert J. Sim, of Jefferson, Ohio, enjoyed the pres-



A BOB-WHITE COVEY.

From painting by Robert J. Sim.

ence of a flock of Bob-whites during one entire winter, and succeeded in keeping them somewhat at ease by furnishing food twice a day. They even spent the night under an ever-green tree in the yard, but while they came regularly night and morning for the ration of grain, they spent the day foraging in the fields and woods in the vicinity. However, one particularly stormy day they came home shortly after dinner, apparently mistaking the partial twilight of the snow-storm for evening twilight. They skurried about in the driving snow and cutting wind for the scattered grain, then prepared for the night. The wind was sucking under their tree to such an extent that they found it no protection, so they selected a spot nearer the house, within plain view of the window, and proceeded to form their bomb. First one stepped around over the spot selected, then another joined him, the two standing pressed close together, forming the first arc of the circle. Another and another joined themselves to this nucleus, always with heads pointing out, tails touching, until the circle was complete. But two were left out! One stepped up to the group, made an opening, then crowded himself in, with much ruffling of feathers. One remained outside, with no room anywhere to get in. He, too, ran up to the circle of heads, then round and round, trying here and there in vain; it was a solid mass. Nothing daunted he nimbly jumped upon the line of backs pressed into a nearly smooth surface, felt here and there for a yielding spot, began wedging himself between two brothers, slipped lower and lower, and finally became one of the bristling heads. In this defensive body against frost and living enemy we may leave them.