

SHOTGUNS BY ROBERT MATTHEWS

THE FOLKS AT CAESAR GUERINI HAVE ANOTHER WINNER IN THE 28-GAUGE TEMPIO LIGHT.

Awisp. That's a good word. A sprite. That applies, too. Both may seem a little corny, but how do you describe a gun with such a "lightness of being?" It's a hard thing to do, but I have to try if I'm going to describe Caesar Guerini's newest offering, because lightness is the hallmark of their new Tempio Light. The 20 gauge is paltry at an even six pounds, but the 28 is the one that really grabs your attention—a mere 5 pounds, 5 ounces.

I have one of the 28s in custody for awhile. And I like it a lot, partly because I've always had a special fondness for the diminutive but effective 28 gauge. Everything about this little stackbarrel works perfectly, just as it should. It has 28-inch barrels to help the overall balance. The nicely figured Turkish-walnut stock sports a round-knob, Prince-of-Wales grip with excellent 26-lpi checkering.

The stock is finished off with one of Caesar Guerini's signature wood buttplates, and it's partially hollowed to help reduce weight and shift the gun's balance forward. That's awfully important on a flyweight shotgun. A butt-heavy gun can be a beast to hit anything with, and I don't think that I would have liked it as much if the balance were any farther back. If you spring for one of these jewels, it would probably be a good idea to pass on the shorter 26-inch barrels for the sake of excellent balance.

The Tempio Light's receiver is constructed of a nickel alloy, which helps it achieve its meager poundage, and it's completely covered with a multi-technique "engraving" that combines a variety of styles with gold-toned pheasant accents on the left side and quail on the right. Altogether, the ornamentation is tasteful and pleasant.

The slender barrels are topped with a narrow, 6mm checkered flat rib with no taper. The little quail-popper is equipped with a single, selective trigger, automatic ejectors, and a full complement of choke tubes so you can tailor the pattern to your needs.

I have to confess that it wasn't long

ago when 7½-pound shotguns were just fine for a day following a pointer or setter through the piney woods of South Georgia or the alders of the Northeast. These days, however, those same shotguns typically start the day at about nine pounds, and I'd swear they gross about ten by the end of a long day afield. With every passing year I seem to appreciate lightweight guns more and more.

Fortunately, there is a much greater awareness of weight and balance in the industry than there used to be. In recent years "lightweight" has taken on a whole new meaning. Six and one-half pounds used to be considered light, and for as long as I can remember, I've considered six pounds to be the least that a gun could weigh and remain "shootable" in any real sense. Six and one-half is still what I'd call "comfortably light." Recently, the industry has galloped headlong into a category that could only be called "super-light." When a shotgun's weight goes below six pounds, balance



becomes even more important.

Balance, of course, is hard to quantify, or even successfully describe. I've seen a lot of folks try, but I've never seen anyone that I felt had succeeded. The curious thing is that you know it when you feel it. As it applies to upland guns, you know that you are homing in on the "sweet spot" when a gun comes up effortlessly, but then settles in and swings smoothly and tracks the target with no tendency to stop short or over-swing.

Another curious thing is that a heavy, well-balanced gun invariably seems lighter than it actually is. Conversely, a lightweight gun that's well balanced always feels heavier than it is. It seems counter-intuitive, but if you fool around with testing different shotguns long enough, you'll come to the conclusion that it's true.

The Tempio Light falls into the latter

category. When you pick it up, it feels light—but not shockingly so. And then you see the number: 5 pounds, 5 ounces. I didn't believe it until I put it on the scales.

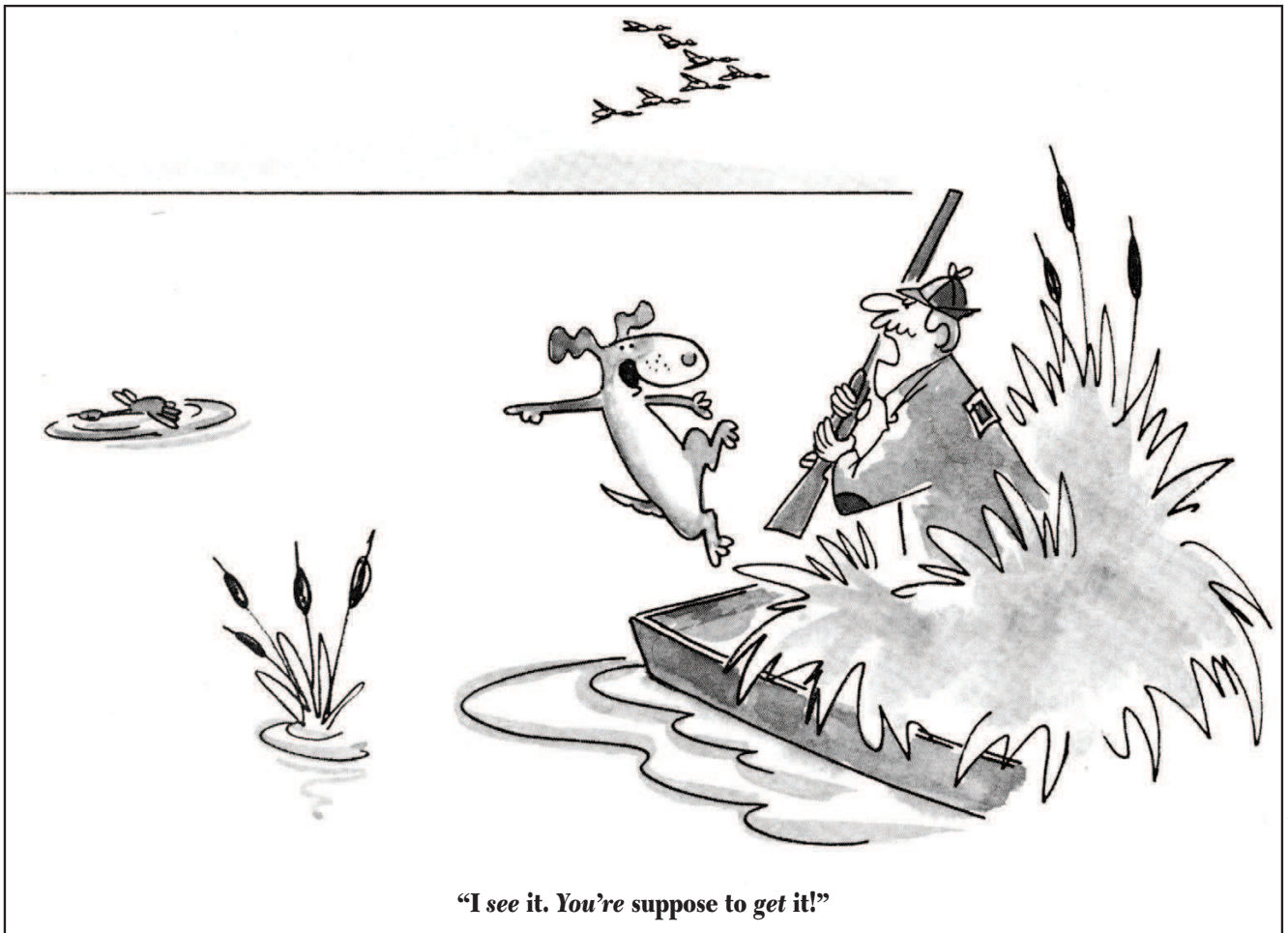
By any standard, the little Tempio Light is very nicely balanced for its scant poundage. My totally unscientific "eyeball calibration" puts the balance point a full half-inch forward of the hinge, which explains how it can be so light and still swing smoothly. This gun is, of course, intended to be a field gun—easy to carry and easy to bring to bear on a live target. It was certainly never intended to be a clay killer.

Nevertheless, when I took it to the range this past week, it acquitted itself admirably. It even showed off a little because I broke more targets with the little 28 than with my seven-pound 12 gauge! Actually, I think it preened and smirked a little at the end of the day!

I think that the folks at Caesar Guerini have another winner in the 28-gauge Tempio Light. It shoots well, carries like a dream, and the 28-gauge shell is adequate for nearly all upland shooting. I expect that it's going to find many fans. Youngsters . . . oldsters . . . anyone who values portability above all else and revels in the sheer joy of a day afield without burden.

My test gun had a standard, round-knob Prince-of-Wales grip, but the gun can be ordered with an English-style straight grip. I'd probably go with that option. It would make an incredibly sleek, fast package.

Truth is, I'm contemplating getting one of these for my grandson. It's plenty light for a starter gun but has enough utility that he can use it for as long as he lives. It'll make an outstanding upland gun that he will never outgrow. ■



"I see it. You're suppose to get it!"

BY JOHN TROTT