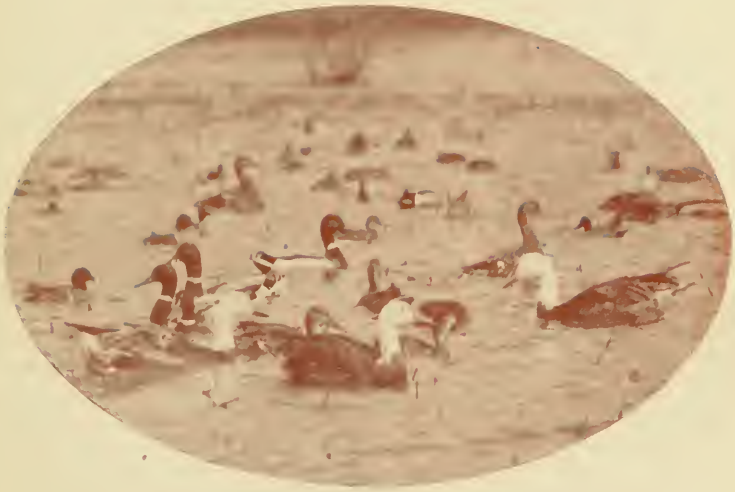
TALES of DUCK and GOOSE SHOOTING

TALES OF DUCK AND GOOSE SHOOTING



Senachwine Lake at Sunrise on the Illinois River.

Bluewing Teal Flushing at Avery Island, La. Photo by Courtesy of E. A. McIhenny.

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON

TALES OF DUCK AND GOOSE SHOOTING

Being Duck and Goose Hunting Narratives From Celebrated Ducking Waters

BY

JOHN B. THOMPSON
CLYDE B. TERRELL
HORATIO BIGELOW
JOHN F. PARKS
THOMAS DIXON, JR.
JOSEPH S. RUGLAND
CHARLES F. COLE
DR. A. A. ALFORD
WILLIAM C. HAZELTON
ROBERT L. MASON
GEORGE L. HOPPER
PERRY C. DARBY
DR. EDMUND W. WEIS

COMPILED AND PUBLISHED BY
WILLIAM C. HAZELTON
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS
1922

DEDICATION

This Volume is

Respectfully Dedicated

To

CLYDE B. TERRELL

A True Sportsman and

A Devoted Friend

SPECIAL PERMISSION HAS BEEN GRANTED BY DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & CO. TO REPRINT FROM "THE LIFE WORTH LIVING," THE NARRATIVE BY THOMAS DIXON, JR.

PRESS OF PHILLIPS BROS., SPRINGFIELD, ILL.

CONTENTS

Books on Wildfowling published by W. C. Hazelton:

1916, Duck Shooting and Hunting Sketches.

1919, Ducking Days.

1921, Wildfowling Tales.

1922, Tales of Duck and Goose Shooting.

Editions now exhausted of the first two volumes.

Chicago address, 407 Pontiac Bldg.

THE PLEASURES OF WILDFOWLING

EDMUND W. WEIS, M. D.

CAN any scientist, biologist or philosopher explain the feeling of anticipating rapture to a man when he hears or sees something suggesting the possibility of hunting? Many have tried but I have never found a satisfactory explanation. Whether it is a relic of Barbarian ancestors to want to kill something, or of atavistic tendency of getting food, or the desire to circumvent the wary, or possibly to exercise an acquired skill with the gun, I do not know; but it must be something imperative that will cause a man to give up the comforts of home, brave possible dangers of sickness by exposure to inclement weather, to brave dangers of accidental mutilation and death. It will do all this and yet in spite of the most he can do, the net results may be—as they frequently are—*nil*. Yet he has had such an uplift of spirit, such ecstatic pleasure, that all other means of sport dwindle to the vanishing point. Far be it from me to attempt a reason, for as a matter of fact I have done all and more of these things. It is impossible for me to say just what motive possesses me. This, however, I do know, and that is when the season comes on there is an indescribable longing for a certain something that will only be satisfied by fondling my gun and examining the ammunition box. Then come the days of desire and the nights of dreaming. Has there ever been a duck hunter who has not filled his bag, has made the most beautiful and almost impossible shots, has gloated over the fall of birds as they hovered over the decoys or swung past

him on swift wing, who has not had almost as much pleasure in anticipation as realization? Then the night after, how there passes in review the incidents of the day, the missed shot, the accident that caused the loss of the grand old greenhead, the folding up of graceful wings, the splash of the fall, the chase of the cripple, and the satisfaction of a clean kill at 50 yards; all of these are gone over and over until the keeper yells, "All up for breakfast!"

Always Something More to Learn.

In all grades and kinds of duck shooting the knowledge necessary of the birds' habits, the effect of the weather on their flight, where they are feeding, the manner of building a "blind" and setting out decoys, the best spot for a "blind," the shifting of a "blind" when the wind shifts, the way to sit and keep still in a "blind," the rule in shooting from "blinds," and hundreds of other lesser and greater vital requirements make up what might be called the scientific duck shooter's arbitrary book of rules.

Each year that the duck hunter goes out he will pick up some new wrinkles from some grizzled old "pusher," or from some of the canny boys that lie around the lakes. I have been at the lakes when some seasoned old pirate would sit grumblingly around the fire in early Spring, only deserting his warm place to go outside and look at the sky, or spit on his finger and hold it up to see which way the wind was blowing. Meanwhile the not so hardened shooters would be working their heads off to bring in a dozen ducks a day. Then some morning old Groucher would be missing, and would come in at night loaded to the stumbling point with ducks. He had been watching the "signs," and when he got ready had poled and cut his way in to where the birds were feeding and had made a "killing." That, of course, was in the old days. Days when there was no "limit," either to the birds or to the number you could kill.

In my humble estimation, and it is not so humble either, being based on forty-five years' experience behind the gun, there is no sport to equal hunting the duck. My experience extends to the Far West, North and South.

Lure of the Fascinating Sport.

Who would not like to peer cautiously through the bushes at a wood duck, a mallard, or, say, a green-wing drake swimming there a boat length or two away? What hunter would not walk far for such a sight? But such things come too far between to explain our enthusiasm at mention of wild ducks. What suggestiveness is conveyed when someone casually remarks that he has seen a flock of ducks! What hundreds of scenes, what thrills of excitement have gone to make up the witchery of that term! What is there about that subtle quality of wildness in these birds that it should lay such a powerful hold upon us? Why such music in the first approaching whistle of their wings? Why such a knell as it grows faint again in the distance? Mark! a flock! Are they coming? Going? Have they seen us? Will they see us? Will they be bunched at this point? Will they pass? How far away?

"Mark north!" Without moving a muscle excepting those of your eyes you follow the flight of a "bunch." The voice of the cedar call, now followed by the live hens out in front, you warily attempt to twist your neck around as they circle, one, two or three times and then the supremest joy when they finally set their wings and float down, as it were, their yellow legs outstretched, down, down to just over the decoys, you rise up, slip your safety and—how you fondle him, admire the wet feathers, pat his plump breast, admire the beautiful colors! The cup of happiness is flowing over. The anticipated is realized, coupled perhaps with a slight regret, that he can never give you that exquisite moment again.

Wherein lies greater satisfaction than a beautiful double—perhaps you are in the blind in the midst of a snowstorm, the peak of your cap is pulled down so that you cannot see well, or some day when the flight has been poor you are slightly dozing, you open your eyes and peer through the meshes in the blind, you see a pair of strange birds swimming just on the outer edges of the decoys. Involuntarily you stiffen, your hand begins to reach toward the stock of your gun, and as you rise the pair head for the sky. They are 35 or 40-45 yards away—perhaps 50—crack, crack—and you start and stare as if some one had presented you with a fine jewel.

Again you are careless in your observation, when suddenly like a streak there passes some teal. Without an instant's hesitation, it is but a moment to raise the gun, slip the safety, put it against your shoulder, throw the muzzle from three to eight feet ahead, press the trigger and they are yours.

Again, and I will never forget this experience, a pair of mallards came in. I made a clean kill with the first barrel and missed with the second; the drake began to climb straight into the sky immediately over the blind; I slipped in the shell, raised the gun, struck a rotten limb above me, loosened a lot of punkwood which filled my eyes, rubbed them clear and then sighted on him away up in the blue, when at the crack of the gun he "let go all hold" and came tumbling down not 20 yards away.

There is no grander passion from which one can realize so large a per cent of absolute pleasure, recreation and pride of achievement as from that of duck or goose shooting. Then after the season is over, you have put gun and paraphernalia away and settle down to business, take it from me, you will be a better man, more energetic in your work and do better in every way from having had a good play.

JUMPING DUCKS ON CURRENT RIVER

JOHN B. THOMPSON

"IF you've never jump-shot ducks offen this river, you'ns hain't never had the best in duck shooting!" declared Jess, a tall, smiling, broadbacked product of the Ozarks, who admitted with a carefree laugh that he had given more of his time on the river, than he had to books and school.

So when I found myself one bright October day, behind a little brush screen in the bow, under the guidance of Jess, I began to appreciate that there were many ways in the duck-hunting game that I had yet to learn.

The clear river runs like a "scairt dog," as Jess expresses it, and only in the small pockets formed by the swirls to backwater, or the long, hurrying reaches of flat, waveless shoal, are ducks to be found. Truly the sky appeared to be banded with them from east to west. They were not for my river, but for the feeds of pinoak and smartweed among the submergings of timber in the Rea Sea overflow of Black River.

We raced down a rapid, and then to our left a bunch of wood ducks leaped from behind a willow-shielded bar, screaming startled "hoo-eeks!" I sent the contents of my twenty at them, positive that the two gaudily-attired drakes it covered would fall. I was, however, easily spared this conceit, for not a feather did I touch. The fast water had me guessing! With open mouth I watched the children of the dark, damp woods wend their way in hasty flight up stream.

"You sometimes miss!" jibed the boatman.

"Sometimes, and then some," I added meekly. And then I agreed again to his comments on my poor marksmanship as a pair of mallard drakes boiled out of a nearby moss bed, and I repeated the performance of missing.

Jess cackled.

It was such a cold-blooded, inexcusable miss that I could not refrain from laughter. And right then, too, I realized I had to change my mode of shooting, by making some allowance for the fast water.

Ozark River of Surpassing Beauty.

Before me now was an expanse of wide, straight river of rare beauty, and reflecting the saffrons, scarlets and drabs—the dress of the environing hardwoods. To the west, receding from high banks, small bars of gravel came to view. Here and there dark moss beds and stalks of long, coarse grass appeared among them, promising something in the way of a secreting place for wildfowl. A sound must have escaped us, or was it undue vigilance on their part? From the end of the grassy plot on the last bar a large flock of gadwalls flew down the river until they were out of sight. Jess seemed to have hopes of their return, for he pushed the boat into the nearest plot of grass with the command to keep down.

For a long while we awaited their return upstream, as is the custom of their kind over restricted water areas. They failed us.

Tingling with impatience, Jess shot the boat midstream, where I began to experiment. First I learned steady footing, when standing upright, by ridding myself of unnecessary trepidation. Then I studied what effect the vibration and the movement of the boat had on proper alignment. On the speed of the river I could set no rule; it varied too much.

Into the suck of an extensive crescent-shaped rapid we fell and floated on to a point above Mill Creek Bay. Far to the east, and advancing our way rapidly, assuming distinctness with

every second, appeared a line of back dots. It approached us with almost unbelievable swiftness. Then as it found outline over the stream in the shape of a great flock of ducks, it forged up it with almost inconceivable rapidity. And when we were in the fastest water they swooped over us. To that instant the bend of the river had concealed us. Now they saw us and towered, placing dependence alone in the fleetness of their wings to offset their momentary confusion. How those bluebills did climb! Somehow I whirled in their change of direction, fired my gun and somehow dropped a pair of them on the silver current.

Teal Frequent Gravel Bars.

Every now and then I jumped ducks, killing a few only, but deriving more sport from my occasional kills than any I had ever made. My ducks were not of the same kind. No two flocks were alike. I would flush a flock of mallards, then gadwalls, widgeons, an occasional redhead; and what few of the scaup family that came to my gun were not flushed on the stream, but were invariably flight ducks dipping too near us.

Soon I gained some skill in the rapids, and the day ended with a kill of fourteen ducks. All my shots happened in the most boisterous water before attaining the foot of a rapid, where the craft behaved unsteadily. All of the ducks immediately hurtled upstream and seemed to have an almost uncanny, gyrating method of twisting away from my shot. The element of uncertainty, without which there is no sport, was not lacking. Likely looking places where ducks should be found were without them. Barren spots, as for instance smooth yellow gravel bars, were the most frequented. Often the swift water carried us into an innocent appearing bar, when a part of it suddenly detached itself and lifted into flight. Teals were always jumped on the bars, and many lazy but wise shoveller permitted close approach, but not quite within killing distance.

When ducks fell on land back of us it required arduous poling upstream to secure them; and, moreover, it exacted much racing ability on Jess' part to keep up with a kill in the current. A cripple afforded the most amusement, for it evoked much profanity from the boatman as well as an exhibition of skill in handling a boat in very swift water. Once in a while the ducks flocked in the open, seemingly enjoying our chase after them. Paddling as fast as we could, they swam on in advance of us. They were on the *qui vive* against surprise.

Wise Old Mallard Drake.

There was the sole drake mallard that I knocked down at a great distance. He hit the water with a splash that alarmed every minnow on the shoal within a hundred yards. The river was wide at this point. Jess and I began our chase after him. He went on down stream, and as we neared him I emptied my gun at him. It had no effect. Just a little ways out of range, I guess, but he gained the opposite bank. There was upstream water there, and the wary old rascal took advantage of it. We had to turn and follow. Our task was not such an easy one. I tried shot after shot at the slowly moving object. Again I failed to stop him. We had only one thing left to do, follow after him. How the perspiration exuded from every pore! The rapid was a tough one. Finally we conquered it, feeling sure it would end in the capture of our crippled drake. I looked in advance, and after peering through the waves of white water saw the drake take the east bank on us. I fired repeatedly at him. He surely bore a charmed existence, for I swear that this time he was within range. Downstream went that old greenhead in water of a character that we usually avoided. He had set the pace and there was nothing for us to do but to follow. When we decided it was safe to neglect the boat we saw the rascal slowing moving to the west bank. That gun of mine simply could not touch him. It poured the No. 7 chilled shot right on

him, it seemed, but without ruffling a feather. I was almost exhausted and Jess in the same state. The duck performed his same mode of keeping away from us so often, that I hardly realized we were going over the same places.

Old Drake Makes for Tree Top.

"He's goin' for that old tree top," gasped Jess as the greenhead made a dive and disappeared in a very large semi-submerged tree on the west bank. "You kin gamble that he's all in, or he'd outswum us," he added.

In a few minutes we came to the top. The duck could not be seen. Jess suddenly called my attention to the long mass of hairy roots hanging in the water from the butt of the forest monster. He pointed his finger down in the water. I followed the direction with my eyes. I saw clinging far up the butt just out of water the bill of the drake. Almost as soon as I saw him Jess caught him with his hand and gave him to me.

I examined the duck very carefully. I could see no wounds, only a small red line behind his head as though he had been seared with a single shot. Of this I apprised Jess. I remembered immediately how gamely this fellow had behaved.

"Jess, we've had lots of sport today; this duck ins't hurt and will live," I announced.

"Yes," drawled the Ozarker, "and I'm thinkin' we'll turn this greenheaded sport loose for another day."

As vanishing day touched the clear water with an impress of soft crimson tints, the drake swam with high head to the center of the river. There we watched him until he faded in the scene. A moment after two happy duck hunters pushed wearily upstream.

DUCK HUNTING ON SKIS

CLYDE B. TERRELL

ONE pleasant summer evening a visitor from Chicago sat on the porch of a Wisconsin farmhouse near Butte des des Morts, swapping stories of duck-hunting experiences with his friend, a farmer lad, who "since knee-high to a grasshopper," had spent his spare moments roaming about the famous wild-duck marshes near his home.

"Did you ever hunt ducks on skis?" inquired the boy.

The visitor shook his head negatively, for this was a kind of duck hunting that is practically unknown except in the vicinity of the marshes adjoining Lakes Butte des Morts, Winneconne and Poygan in Wisconsin.

"These marsh skis," continued the boy, with some surprise, "are similar to the Norwegian skis, but they are a little wider, and are made especially for walking on bogs, marshes and rice-beds where it would be impossible to wade or push a boat. With them a hunter may navigate such places and get those birds that fall beyond scent and range of his good retriever, or on brisk Autumn mornings enjoy some exciting 'jump shooting' out on the marsh."

Skiing for ducks is to me the most exciting and adventurous form of duck hunting; every moment is full of expectation that a duck may jump out of the grass from almost any quarter: then there are the thrills that one feels when crossing a hazardous stretch of mud and water. The physical exercise is, to me, superior to that taught in any gymnasium. The fellow who does

not enjoy physical exercise need not attempt marsh skiing. The beginner should not over-exert himself, but if he will start out on short skiing trips after ducks, and increase their length as he becomes more able and accustomed to them, he will be physically benefited. Almost all forms of duck hunting are enjoyable to me, but skiing for ducks has always appealed most to me; perhaps because I am one of those restless sort of fellows that like to be "on the move." I like the expectation and excitement, and then the exercise of skiing keeps one comfortably warm on cold days when the more patient fellows in blinds behind their decoys are freezing.

Rare Sport in Itself.

Skiing is sport in itself; marsh skiing for ducks has the additional feature of one of the most fascinating forms of duck hunting. Many exciting times I have had after ducks on skis, but there is one hunt that seems to stand out from all the rest.

One raw November afternoon, Ray, my chum; Nick, the black cocker spaniel, and I arrived half-frozen at our hunting shanty on the Butte des Morts marsh, but determined to bag a few mallards. A heavy wind was blowing and as the waters out on the lake became rougher and rougher the mallards came off the lake in great flocks. It was too rough for them to ride the waves. They would circle around over the bogs and wild-rice fields to the north of us until, finally satisfying themselves that the place concealed no enemies, they would drop down here and there, usually beside one of the many small ponds scattered over the marsh.

It being too late to go out that afternoon, we decided to ski out there the next day. After a good hot supper, one of the best ever, we rolled into our beds. In our dreams that night we experienced all kinds of exciting experiences, made all manner of difficult shots and had a grand shoot.

Sport the Next Morning.

Next morning we were up early; filled up on pancakes with maple syrup, bacon and coffee, and as the rising sun began show its rosy face over the marsh we were out with our skis.

Scarcely out of the dooryard Nick's tail began to wag faster and faster—up jumped a mallard almost under my feet. Up went my gun, "Snap!"—no report. There were no shells in the gun and of course by the time I got it loaded the mallard was out of range. Ray was not close enough for a shot, but he had the laugh on me, and I made up my mind that next time I would have my gun loaded before I started.

We now started out into the marsh on our skis. Soon Nick caught sight of another duck and we skied as fast as we could, following him. Suddenly Nick made a jump on a bunch of grass and after a moment he came slowly toward us with a mallard in his mouth. It had crawled under the grass out of the cold and could not get away quick enough.

A little farther on some mallards jumped from the edge of a small pond near Ray, and as Ray shot, another jumped up almost behind me. "Bang! bang!" I got him! I had passed within a few feet of him and he had never stirred until he heard the gun shot. And so it went and many other ducks met their fate.

When we were returning to the shanty, Nick ran across the trail of another duck. I hurried up as fast as I could, leaving Ray behind me, but in my haste I started to cross a little pond on the thin ice. About half-way across the ice cracked, and down I went in the water nearly but not quite over my hip boots.

"I'll be back after I get this duck," Ray shouted, as he hurried off after the dog.

It seemed a long time that he was after that duck, and meanwhile I was sinking into the mud and the water was coming nearer and nearer the tops of my hip boots. At last he got back and nearly split, laughing at my misfortune. He stopped laugh-

ing long enough to push one of his skis out for me to step on and I got out on to firm bog. If he had not arrived when he did I would soon have had my boots filled with ice-cold water.

Heard a Yell From Companion.

Soon after I had a chance to laugh. I heard a yell behind me from Ray. He was going across a stretch of ice and water and had slipped and fallen flat in the water.

We hurried back to the house for dry clothes; and, besides, the ducks in our hunting-coat pockets were getting heavy. On counting up, we found that we had twenty-two fine mallards that morning.

The visitor who had been listening to the tale now aroused himself.

"How are these skis made?" he inquired.

"Come over to the shop and I'll show you a pair," said the boy.

They crossed the road to the workshop, where, leaning against the wall, was a newly-finished pair of marsh skies. They were about nine feet long and six inches wide, of seven-eighths inch clear cedar and curved up at one end. A piece of heavy leather about four inches wide was riveted across each ski a little in front of the center, forming a pocket in which the toe of one's boot could be loosely inserted.

"When you make this pair of marsh skis," advised the boy, "be sure to get this pocket for your foot placed just far enough ahead so that the rear end of your ski will drop down a bit and when skiing you will not be running the tip of your ski down into the mud. I consider cedar or butternut the best of woods to make marsh skis from; these woods are light and strong, and do not warp and bend out of shape after you have had them in the water."

DUCKING ON THE SUSQUEHANNA FLATS, PAST AND PRESENT

GEORGE L. HOPPER

THE Susquehanna ducking grounds, or the Susquehanna River flats, are located within that grand old commonwealth, the State of Maryland, extending from the eastern to the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay, ten miles in width, thence from the mouth of the Susquehanna River, down the bay, a distance of four or five miles. Through almost the center of the flats, to Spesutia Island, a deep channel flows, of sufficient depth to allow vessels drawing from eight to ten feet of water to navigate, with the aid and assistance of tugs or other steam craft. On both sides of the channel the flats extend to both the western and eastern shores, subdivided here and there by sloughs. The flats are plainly outlined and designated by the dense growth of wild celery, which is covered, during normal tides, with from four to eight feet of water. During an extremely dry summer, the water becomes slightly brackish.

The wild celery of the Susquehanna flats is one of the most enticing of all the wild-duck foods in our Southern waters. It is especially sought after by the canvasback, redhead and blackhead ducks. All the other varieties feed upon the wild celery, more or less. Several of the smaller varieties are exceedingly fond of it, but are not strong enough to make the deep dive and pull it loose, root and branch. The ruddy and baldpate depend largely upon what they can grab from the canvasbacks and redheads when they rise to the surface of the water. Mallards and black ducks are seldom, if ever, seen upon the flats, since they

are not deep-water ducks. They prefer to remain almost entirely in the marshlands. The Canada goose and the whistling swan, in early days, were also found in great numbers upon the Susquehanna flats. Since the passage of the Migratory Bird Law, the return of the geese and swans have been especially noted by observation of local and other sportsmen, more especially just before the birds' annual flight to the breeding grounds of the Northland.

Gathering of Waterfowl a Marvelous Sight.

It is a most wonderful and interesting sight to watch the movements of the wildfowl just a few days before they start on their northern journey. All the ducks of the South Atlantic Coast seem to assemble there. The greatest confusion now prevails among them. They congregate in many flocks, each flock covering several acres. Flock after flock will rise, circle and recircle over the flats, returning almost to the very spot or spots from which they had just arose. Many individuals and small squads are continuously visiting the larger flocks, back and forth. They are flying all day long. This continues until the weather conditions are just right, and they know, as nobody else does; then they all take wing, rising higher and higher each time they make the circle over the flats; and every time they recircle, a large flock breaks from the dense mass, heading north-northwest, without any mariner's compass to guide them over a trackless route to their far-away Northern breeding grounds. Sometimes they leave at sunrise; sometimes at sundown. Many remain for a few days after the first great flight. Then they will all be gone excepting a few stragglers, and the poor cripples, who are obliged to remain. Those remaining pair off, mate, and nest in the marshlands..

Soon after the sora rail bird shooting is over, and they have taken that silent and mysterious flight to the Southland, the little blue-wing teal then return to the estuaries and sloughs of

the bay from the Northland. Later the little green-wing teal arrives. The green and blue-wing teal make great sport during the latter part of September and early October, just before the open season upon the flats. The mallards and black ducks are the next to arrive, and settle in their old haunts in the marsh-lands. Not until "The frost is on the punkin' and the fodder's in the shock" does the blackhead, baldpate and little ruddy or greaser make their first appearance upon the flats. The redheads are the next to return, but the canvasback and Canada goose do not return in any great numbers until there is settled winter weather in the Northwest.

The first authenticated record of the great number and variety of the great number of duck who annually assemble upon the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay is recorded in a little personal log-book of Captain John Smith's, who, according to our early history, was the first white man to navigate the bay and Susquehanna River, the river being navigable for a distance of only about four and half miles.

Remarkable That Any Survive.

When we consider how accessible the Susquehanna flats and ducking grounds are to the most densely populated section of this country, so that sportsmen living as far north as Boston may leave their homes and business at 9 o'clock in the morning, and reach the Susquehanna River in time to make all necessary preparations for the next day's shooting upon those flats; when we more fully realize what a continuous annual slaughter of those ducks have been taking place ever since the first settlers, it is a wonder there is a single duck remaining to return to those winter feeding grounds.

Not only have these ducking grounds been accessible to all the sportsmen of the East, but sportsmen from all parts of the world have made passing visits to those ducking grounds for a day's shoot.

Commission merchants in the past have purchased and shipped thousands of the wildfowl. Queen Victoria during her lifetime had a standing offer for so many pairs of canvasbacks and redheads to be annually delivered in England. King Edward and King George continued the order.

More than a hundred bush-whack or sneak-boats, and seventy-five single and double sink-boxes were licensed by the county authorities bordering on the headwarters of the bay the past season. Under the most unfavorable conditions in years, more than five thousand ducks were killed on November 4, the first day of the present open season.

Every method, fair and foul, has been devised to decoy and capture the ducks upon these feeding grounds. The tolling Chesapeake retriever, shooting over baited grounds, shooting from blinds, bush-whack or sneak-boats, and sink-boxes—all of which have been legitimate according to the local laws; while the market hunters in the past have resorted to every foul and unlawful device, the swivel gun and gill net at night being the most unsportsmanlike. They skilfully set a gill net at some favorite feeding place, during the night, in such a way that the ducks' heads become entangled when in the act of diving for the roots of the wild celery, and they are drowned by hundreds. Selecting a calm, cloudy night, a proper time for such depredations, with a swivel gun (big gun) charged with a quarter of pound of powder (black) and a pound of shot, they fairly slaughter the ducks while feeding. Ducks can be heard feeding on such a night a considerable distance. It sounds like the rippling of a small stream. Lying flat upon his stomach in the bottom of his shallow boat, constructed for the purpose, with two short paddles, the gunner cautiously approaches the unsuspecting ducks until within a few yards. Then he knocks the side of his boat with a paddle, pulling the trigger with the other hand as the ducks are making their first spring into the air, crippling as many as he kills.

In our boyhood days tolling with the Chesapeake dog was our greatest fun and pleasure. The cunning sagaciousness of the dog, to say nothing of his companionship and that of some little nigger like my boy Limber Jim, gave a zest to the sport we can never experience again. We were true children of nature then, and, the only time of our lives, true democrats. We walked side by side, and sat side by side upon the same rocks and logs; bit off a "chaw" of tobacco from the same plug, spitting its bitter sweetness upon the sands of the shore; hiding behind a rock or old log, while in ecstasy we nudged each other with our elbows as Old Bob, Wave or Major were successfully tolling the ducks within easy range.

The Sink-Box An Expensive Luxury.

The sink-box and its equipment is undoubtedly the most expensive "layout" which a duck hunter can possess, requiring from three to five hundred decoys, and a crew of three men to man the yacht and look-out boat. Shooting from a sink-box, over so many decoys, is the most magnificent and exhilarating of all such sport. A good shot from a sink-box, like old Captain Bill Dobson, the greatest shot from a sink-box that ever lived, can do wonderful execution. His name became a household word, by reason of his mysterious and successful methods of decoying ducks. He never possessed such a thing as an artificial duck call; lying flat on his back within the sink-box, projecting his hands just above the upper edge and manipulating them in such a manner, he would imitate so perfectly a duck flapping its wings as it rises from the water, it would often attract a flock of ducks, while in flight, though far out of range.

I have sat upon the deck of a gunning yacht, under the most favorable conditions, observing a flock of canvasbacks or redheads which were flying so far to the eastward or westward of his decoys it seemed impossible for him to turn them by the

simple movements of his hands. They would often pass his decoys far to the windward, then luff by making a long turn, swing towards his decoys against the wind, darting within easy range. Not until they had turned and drew within hearing, did he begin talking to them, by chattering like a female duck, when it is feeding contentedly in some safe and secluded place. He always had three guns, one on each side of the box, and one in his lap. He could operate and discharge three muzzle-loaded guns successfully upon a darting flock, killing the last ducks well within bounds. With his old muzzle-loaded guns, he has been known to bag nearly 500 canvasbacks and redheads in a day's shoot. On one occasion I saw a flock of eleven canvasbacks dart to his decoys, and not one came out. He did it with five shots.

Rear Admiral Robley D. Evans, our own "Fighting Bob," in his lifetime frequently visited the Susquehanna ducking grounds during the open season. He always engaged Captain George Mitchell, lighthouse keeper of the Battery Island lighthouse, which is located almost in the center of these shooting grounds. Turning to Captain Mitchell on one occasion, after making a clean right and left from the double sink-box, he exclaimed: "By the gods, Mitchell! I would rather do this than be president of the United States!"

Shooting from blinds, tolling and shooting from the bush-whack boats were the only methods in vogue in the early days. The market hunter was not so much in evidence. What ducks were killed from blinds and boats were consumed locally.

Old contracts of those days, between the old slave owners of that section, can still be seen on file at the Harford county court-house, where they are often shown to visitors. The contracts usually stipulate, after the usual preamble, "My negroes shall not be fed upon wild ducks more than three times a week," etc. How interesting that must sound to these old club epicureans of this day and times!

A DUCK HUNT ON BIG LAKE, ARKANSAS

JOHN B. THOMPSON

THERE was a summer warmth clinging to the Sunken Lands. Insects droned, and garrulous little straw-green marsh frogs, that conformed in coloration to the fall-stricken flag and saw grass, held sway continuously. Hunting coats were uncomfortable until the wind shifted and brought a cooling message from the northwest. The gradual termination of Little River into Big Lake and its scatters had an aspect conspicuously weird, yet not devoid of a beauty peculiarly its own, with the dead foliage of gums, cottonwood and cypress enhancing it.. There was smething about the immensity of the inundation, and the ghastly nakedness of water-killed timber in places, that for a while my attention was lured from sport.

The overflow, where I first entered, reminded me of a restless sea, where the great meadows of flag, coarse moss and tall smartweed gave a play of resistance against the slightest breeze.

The ways of the duck boat were legion. The native knew when to interpret the slightest parting of the flag as a passage-way for the shallow-draft light craft with his long slender paddle. The face of my guide was emotionless, except for a smile that bordered on contempt as I acknowledged my confusion over his selection of routes to the ducking grounds. A dull light brown was his face—the swamp taint, it was—like the falling hickory leaves, and of so simple an expression it was almost sinister. His long, tapering fingers showed the wrinkles and whiteness which constant contact with water will give, but they exhibited none of the callousness which is the consequence of hard labor.

The Market Hunter at Work.

Gunfire could be heard in all directions. Suddenly it dawned on me that I would rather watch the hunter than shoot ducks. To Bill, my guide, I imparted this, and in response he grunted acquiescence, and then laid on more laboriously with the paddle.

After a moment the duck boat glided into an opening. I could see sets of live decoys, perfectly trained fellows without the inhibitive cord and anchor, feeding within fifteen yards or more of the flag blinds. A flock of mallards appeared above the banding tree tops, then falling into the enticing lay of the skilled native caller, they set for a pitch near the first blind. Only then I saw the hunter, as the staccato of his pump gun drew my eyes there. Some ducks fell. I saw him nonchalantly push his boat to the kill, and aware that the boat could contain but few more ducks, he picked up the dead ducks, left the decoys there, and proceeded to a dock, where we followed him.

So in the path of the market hunter we went, Bill calling to him now and then in a bantering way. And then we struck a pathway in the flag, which ended at a duck buyers' dock. On it was heaped a mountain of ducks. More ducks than I had ever seen piled together in all my life! The hundred and fifteen, which the market hunter disposed of at 25 cents each to the buyer from the East, seemed but an insignificant number in comparison.

None commented on the pile of dead ducks. I withheld speech. The market hunter returned to his boat, and with a new supply of shells paddled back to the scene of his former activities.

One Type of Sportsman.

Bill pushed me on until I tired of the repetitions of the performance. I intrusted to my guide that I wanted to see the sportsman shooting, and he led me to him. His performance

was about the same, not quite so deadly, but he shone as though he were obsessed with but one motive, and that to kill as many ducks as he could. On that day the only difference I could distinguish between the market hunter and the man with the self-imposed title of sportsman was, the former limited himself to a variety of ducks, and the latter limited himself to neither varieties nor numbers.

All day long we followed in the lair of ducks, and for the life of me amidst the big continuous flight of ducks and the noise of the shoot I could stir up no desire to kill. Duck boat after duck boat we passed, each laden to the water topheavy with its burden of dead ducks. One hunter had a sense of grim humor about him—possibly without his being aware of it—for on top of his load of dead strutted upright a number of live decoys vociferously proclaiming their share in the accomplishment.

Once in a while I tried to interview a market hunter. The majority of them were sullen, and responded nothings in forced monotones. One or more laughed, when Bill advised them that I had come to shoot and would not shoot. One tapped his head with a gory finger, as significant of my mental unsoundness. Another shrilled back reproachfully: "Club Man?"

Just then I thought I would enjoy a pass. It might be sport there, when at another kind of a ducking ground it is often considered the reverse. Still I decided on it. Bill mentioned a pass, and we went to it. It was too late in the day, however, and the ducks were now back in the woods on their feeds. Would I like to see a feed? Sure, nothing would please me more! My guide knew of one, a round pond back in the timber which was skirted with a profuseness of smartweed. Thither we went, creeping with excessive caution. Now and then a noise escaped us as our little craft grated crisply against the dry rushes.

Ducks On the Feed.

We were on the feed before the ducks were aware of our presence. I looked out into the pond as Bill pointed to it with his fingers. He might as well have spared himself of the effort. The noise of mallards was indescribable. As for numbers they were beyond count or estimate. The way they were flattened out they resembled an immense army of restless turtles more than anything else I could think of. Apparently there was not room for more, still each second additional ducks were pouring in on the feed, and jamming a way for their repast.. In a moment a mallard hen and three green-headed attendants swam almost to the side of the boat. They were so started at our invasion for the nonce they were without signs of flight.

It was I who made the mistake. I reached out my hand to touch one, then they jumped out of the water, the hen quacking her reverberating alarm call. And then I used the twenty-guage once, dropping one drake. The entire swamp was on wing, and the colored animation so resplendent amidst the sodden environments departed. Immediately I regretted my rash act, for once more from the blinds on the lake I heard the murderous reports of the magazine guns!

Dusk was approaching. Bands of wildfowl passed the stark timber in moving miniature silhouettes bathing in the red and gold lights, the parting benison of the setting sun. The flight of squawking, ungainly, sluggish green herons seemed endless. From the east came the noise of the discharge of many guns. We paddled with all our might to a great flag opening, just as the sun surrendered its light-giving office to a big yellow moon, that magnified the trees into outrageous proportions.

Burning of the Roost.

Thousands of ducks were circling at the roosts, but the death-dealing gunners were there to keep them away. We came to the first roost while a sky line of weak vermilion was yet visible. I could see the gunners. You can be sure they were not market gunners, but sportsmen from the metropolis across the Big River. They saw me and invited me to join in the slaughter. Yes, five of them! Their guns flashed so rapidly I could not begin to count the time between shots. I saw flock after flock circle and dip, and then rise into the moonlight with many missing. Right then I could not have killed a duck, if it had meant that it was my last shot on earth at ducks. It was too much for one day, even for an old hunter like myself. It was all so appalling it sickened!

On arrival at my debarking place the assembled natives commented on my lack of success—an unbelievable occurrence on Big Lake when a flight was on—and Bill looked quite long at my sole mallard. But Bill made no remark. As I shook his hand it had a warmer feeling and tenser clasp than when I first met him; and when the parting salutation was muttered, I was positive I beheld a new glint from his eye. Was Bill seeing my view of the subject?

DUCK SHOOTING ON A CLUB-FOOT LAKE,—REELFOOT

ROBERT LINDSAY MASON

UPON our approach to Reelfoot Lake we could see great blankets of ducks spreading themselves across the sky, shutting out the light and filling the air with the roar of their myriad wings. Many of the flocks were headed for the lowlands of the Mississippi, but others were dropping into the Great Stopping Place between the Great Lakes and the gulf, our volcanic lake. Who knows but that the Keeper and Preserver of all game did not wrinkle up this little place upon the face of Nature in order to create a half-way resting place for His feathered children?

Up to the present time, duck shooting on Reelfoot has been attendant with risk—not for the ducks so much as for the shooters. Certain lawless elements have commanded this region so long that unless a "sport" possesses the open sesame to the exclusive order of the P. C.—Pusher's Conference—of Hotel Samberg, it is an even draw as to whether he ought to venture upon these shores.

Jim Commons, Fatty Brooks, Slim Griffith, and sundry other pushers less famous, may punctuate the morning air with revolver shots which mean: "Get up, you lazy sports if you expect to get ducks today!" or the signal may shout: "Lookout boys! New sport on the lake. May be a revenuer!" Or a particularly rapid staccato may scream: "Game warden!"

Claude, Jim and I did not fear the familiar perils of this watery wilderness for we were already initiated. And, too, we recognized the fact that if it were not for the pusher's patent oar which enables him to pull facing the bow, we might now be resting at the bottom of the lake, strangled in the submarine forest of trapanatans or the twisted roots of cypress.

Reelfoot a Volcanic Lake.

In the year 1812 Nature coughed, gulped mightily and a slew-footed lake sixty square miles in extent was born in the twinkling of an eye where nothing had been but peaceful landscape in the northwestern corner of Tennessee. The basin thus created was not filled with the muddy water of the Mississippi, for its waters are crystal.

The P. C. decided that the forming of the lake caused the earthquake! We shooters could not dispute it. We could not swear that the lake, entire, had not existed before—sub-terra—and that by mixing its own waters with the subterranean fire had not belched itself bodily from the bowels of the earth. Nature has an effective way of getting rid of her unpleasant in'ards very quickly, just as Claude does when he eats too much of Mrs. Smith's delightful cooking—which is nearly ever time we go there.

At any rate, this weird stretch of water is a vast cemetery of trees. Everywhere their stumps and ragged skeletons stand stark monuments of a primeval forest. Some protrude from the depths like the sunken masts of a lost armada; others like the peaceful spiles of Venice; still other veterans like the banished admirals of an inland navy. The owls and heavy-winged "water-buzzards" have never left it, for here they find riotous subsistence upon the teeming fish. So do the furtive fishermen, not yet quite sure of their rights, though in times past they have fought—even murdered—for them in the face of crooked legislation.

Use Live Decoys.

Our progressive pushers—Fatty and Jim—use live, trained decoys—"Dicks and Susies." These little feathered, intelligent friends trod familiarly over our legs with their pink, web feet, chattering with much joyous anticipation of the hunt as they clambered into our boats. Our guides had turned them out of their pens before daylight to "limber up." They are rarely ever fed; only when hunting is dull. We hunters had eaten generously of Mrs. Smith's baked croppy fish, roast duck, fried coot, hot rolls, etc. Duck and man seemed ready for the fray.

Sam Applewhite's motor, after doing stunts over submerged log and snag, chugged us out beyond the pale of film ice and within reach of the sport.

As we churned along Fatty offered the remark "the crop" on the lake had been poor this year, owing to the high water.

"Crop of what?" inquired Claude.

"Umbrellas," Fatty answered laconically, and considered the matter closed.

"Today's a good day for umbrellas, I'll admit," still persisted Claude ironically as he dodged the drip from his pusher's sou'wester, "but I don't see any growin' around here nearabouts."

"There!" jerked Fatty, pointing straight downward toward the surface of the water.

"Umbrella plant!" yelled Fatty. "Nuts! Nuts! Ducks feed on 'em."

"Umph! Oh!" grunted Claude, and subsided calmly.

We soon ensconsed ourselves in the curious blinds of Rat Island; the waist-high hollow stumps among the curiously distorted boles and roots of the clumps of water cypress.

Then Sam cut loose and waved a goodby as his exhaust faded to windward.

Decoys Turned Out.

Our excited Dicks and Susies were soon turned loose to feed. There were only a few coots in sight. Fatty possessed one those inimitable duck calls for which Reelfoot is famous and when his industrious decoys did not tune up with the proper duck chatter Fatty soliloquized in wild celery talk and umbrella nut conversation.

Very soon, with the help of our "pitching" Dicks and Susies, he pulled them down right out of the sky. Here they come! Our chilled veins and limbs were suddenly warmed with action. As the birds breasted against the wind to settle, we raised from our tree-clumps and let them have it.

Our decoys kept a comical eye heavenward and dodged our kill as it splashed into the half frozen waters of the lake. Down we went again. More nutty talk by Fatty, and here they came. Up we went like Jacks in boxes. Down came our feathered shower, the lifeless bodies often skidding for many feet across the firmer ice from the momentum of the fliers. We shot until our guns were too hot to hold comfortably, then we had lunch.

Unfortunately, that afternoon a great raft of coots a mile long settled off to our right; as a result the new ducks arriving began swerving off to their feeding grounds, though decoyed by us. This continued until we were compelled to bring in our faithful decoys and depart for Cane Island. Although we shot among the coots frequently we could not disperse them. After our second round at Cane Island we reached our limit. There was a furtive exchange of glances in which temptation was written.

"Well!" said Fatty, "we'll be going!" That settled it. It is an inviolable rule of the P. C. never to exceed the limit nor to shoot on the grounds before sunrise or after sunset. We obeyed the mandate by paddling our way homeward.

Next Day's Sport.

The next morning we were upon the water early. The ice was so thick it had to be broken in the "blow-holes" to allow the staking of the decoys. Presently Dicks and Susies were working bravely. Up came great clouds of redheads, mallards, teals, and a few canvasbacks. We let them have it at close range. After desultory shooting we were compelled to decamp to Goose Basin on account of the changing wind. We did not go for geese, however, for these fair creatures did not deign to descend from "The Flying Wedge—The Aerial Goose Limited." They skimmed by a mile high like a whizzing arrow winging southward. Our duck chatter was small peas to them, and besides, they were due at the Everglades, Florida, by dark. What attractions did a Reelfoot puddle, full of sharp stakes, have for them when they could feed in the sea?

Fatty chattered some more cunning duck talk while we battered them from the reeds. Our boatload of game at close of day spoke eloquently of our success.

Outcast Duck Joins Party.

As we turned to leave our lagoon at sundown we heard an isolated quack. A lost "Dick" was quacking desolately in a lonesome pool. Jim counted his Dicks and Susies. "No, they are all here," he said. Turning to look again, we saw a lost decoy paddling vigorously for our boat. He clambered in without an invitation and seemed to be glad to be once more with those of his kind. His stay with us was very brief, however. The welcome he received from his feathered brethren was not to his taste, so he put over the gunwale and dived into the depths of Reelfoot.

"Go, you son-of-a-gun!" yelled Fatty. "Ye hain't nothin' but a derned tramp nohow!"

He never came up.

He had evidently been guilty of some infraction of the laws of Dicks and Susies.

He may be now feeding on rich umbrella nut and wild celery in duck heaven or perhaps he went to a hotter place reserved for feathered Judases who betray their kind. If an unkind fate destroyed him, he had no family or kind to bemoan his departure, for, by trade a "Judas," it is safe to say—could they reason—all of his wild friends would be glad of his sudden demise in whatever tragic manner.

We did not stop to inquire but threaded our way back to a good hot supper and a more hospitable welcome then he received from his kind.

As we returned our guide glanced sidewise up at the moon and said: "Boys, we ain't goin' to git no ducks termorrer!" And we didn't. According to the usual protective instincts of all wild things, the wild ducks of Reelfoot Lake will feed upon the wild celery and the rich trapanatans at night if the moon is shining and will rest in the daytime. During this period Mr. Hunter will look in vain for the sign of a wing. He may find the spectacled coot standing idly about in the shallows and looking wise, but that's all. The ducks are rafted out on the lake and on the Mississippi.

The Reelfoot Lake basin at twilight, when the screechowls are quavering out their lost-soul dirges in the gathering gloom, is one of the most desolate places on earth. Above us the scudding clouds hid the face of the moon and arched in flying columns that eerie graveyard of tree-snags and owls.

As we looked back into that queer volcanic graveyard, that city of the dead trees, we hoped that this great Stopping Place for the birds, made in a moment's thought by the Creator, might not prove a shut-in sepulchre for the migratory fowl, the movements of which are the strangest phenomena of all the clock-like automaton of Nature. Good sportsmen will not make it so.

GOOSE SHOOTING ON THE MISSOURI RIVER

PERRY C. DARBY

ON the subject of goose shooting, I am not posing as one who knows it all, but am giving you my experience as best I can, and of my friends who have put in a lifetime goose hunting on this famous old stream.

I was born and raised in southwestern Iowa, Page County, and this and adjoining counties are the garden spot of Iowa. Some of the finest lands in the state lie here.

If any of you who read this think anyone can go out and make big kills of geese any day when they are flying, you have another guess coming. I invite you to come and try conclusions with the geese and I will wager you come out second best eight times out of ten. Some days they will work good and other days they will not come in at all. Sometimes you will make a good kill and sure think you have found the secret of success. The very next day you can try the same methods and can't get one single bird. They will not notice your decoys at all. Then you jump up, go out and look at your blind from all angles. You can't see anything wrong. Still they won't come in. Then you feel as though you never did know how to hunt *geese*.

Canada Goose a Grand Game Bird.

The Canada goose is a bird of many moods. At times very wise, but at other times very foolish. I admire all our game birds, but the grand old Canada is my favorite, and when you kill one you can console yourself with the thought that you are

looking at the grandest, gamiest bird that flies. They surely are the hardy fellows and will stand lots of cold as long as they can get plenty of feed. They dislike to leave the corn-fields and they like to pull up the young Fall wheat.

The Old Missouri River.

The Missouri River, with its ever-changing current and many sand bars, has been the natural habitat of the wildfowl long before man ever saw it and will continue to be so as long as there are any left to make the journey both in the Fall and Spring. The geese especially use this waterway, and the Fall is when we always have had the best shooting. They commence to arrive here in October and stay until the river freezes over and the feed is covered with snow. The Hutchins geese arrive first, then come the speckled bellies, white fronts, blue goose, snow (or white goose), and the Canadas, the grandest bird of all, arrive about the first of November. Then is when goose hunting is at its best.

November arrives and the heart of the goose hunter is glad. The boys on the river call me and say that the flight is on. The big fellows are coming on the sand bars to roost. That is what I have been waiting to hear. I am a boy again, work is put to one side, and my mind wanders back a few years when as a boy I stood on the hill back of our house and watched the long lines of geese pass on tireless wings. How fascinating it was to me! I wondered if I ever would be large enough to go hunting! I love the call of the quail, the boom-boom of the prairie chicken, the quack-quack of the mallard, the whistle of the widgeon or sprigtail, but the sweetest music to me is the sonorous Ah honk! Ah honk! of the Canada goose.

We arrive at the river with our guns, shells, decoys and dogs. The boys tell me they have been using the big bar over in the bend, which has more than three thousand acres in it and river

channel running on both sides. Half of it is bare; only drift and large logs on it. The other half is grown over with young willows. The geese are using the open bar.

Geese Leave to Feed.

It is now about 9 o'clock in the morning and all the geese have left the bar for feed, going to the wheat and corn-fields. We row our boat across the channel, pull it up out of sight along some high bank or up into the willows, and go and look the bar over to find where they have been roosting. We find plenty of signs on a good open place. Two of us dig a pit not more than three feet deep and just large enough to sit in comfortably; when we stoop over we nearly fill the hole, so if they come in high and circle over us they won't see anything to scare them. They are suspicious and everything has to look perfectly natural to them.

We put out our decoys about fifteen yards from our pit, setting the profiles in V-shape facing the wind; that is so they can see them from any direction. We are now ready to put out our live decoys, four or five tame Canadas. We have halters for them; tie them as you would a horse. They soon become used to it. We get into the pit. It is almost noon, and how hungry we are! We proceed to devour our lunch and watch for the geese, whom we know will soon be returning.

We have not long to wait. We see approaching at a distance a big flock of more than a hundred Canadas and drawing nearer and nearer to us. They cross the channel over the Missouri. How your heart beats and your breath comes a little quicker as you hear that Honk! Ah Honk! Honk! as the old gander discovers your decoys on his roosting place. Our geese commence to call and and he answers. Look! They are setting their wings and getting lower, coming straight for your decoys. You don't dare move, and scarcely breathe. They are getting closer and

closer. They are about twenty yards high and almost over the decoys. Our gander is talking to them. They think all is well and have no fear at all. They are putting down their black feet to alight. Such a sight! I cannot describe it! You would have to be there to realize what it means to have those big fellows right on you and you grasping your automatic until it seems that your fingers will crush the stock. It even makes the veteran's heart beat a little faster against his bosom. The suspense is something awful, but the time for action hos arrived. We arise and the whole air seems filled with geese. Our nerves are steady now and the guns are doing their deadly work. It is soon over and six big fellows lie on the sand dead. One is going down a hundred yards away. We make a run to get him, and try to capture him alive. We won't kill him unless we have to as he is only wing-broken and we want to tame him and turn him out with our flock on the farm. They soon become very tame. He was captured after some running and dodging. It is not the easiest thing in the world to capture a winged goose. We gather up the dead and return to our pit.

Flock Passes Us By.

The next flock pass us by and seeing the boys' decoys down at the other end of the bar commence to circle and get lower. I say to my partner: "They are going to give the other boys a shot." Sure enough, they sail in and leave four of their number behind lying on the sand. We wait a while longer and bag a few from some small flocks. It is after 4 o'clock and the flight is over for the afternoon. We pull up our decoys and return across the channel to our camp, well pleased with our day's sport.

Driving the Canada Goose.

Next morning we are up early and discover a flock of about two hundred resting in one place. Vic declares he can drive them over some of us. We cross the channel, keeping out of

their sight. Bailey, Al and myself scatter out in different places where we think they will cross, secreting ourselves behind a high bank or drift. Vic goes away around and coming up as close as he can to them, shoots to scare them. Up they get and go straight for Al, who is behind a high bank. They are climbing higher and higher all the time. He killed three with heavy loads of No. 2 shot.

Tolling Old Wawa.

While we are admiring his kill there is a big flock come in and alight at the upper end of the bar. Vic has a little spaniel, small in size, but he sure understands the goose-hunting game. We all secret ourselves in some drifts. Vic takes Sammy in his arms and shows him the geese and tells him to fetch them. He sights them and away he goes almost to them. They jump into the air, but keep low and circle around him. He capers around and works toward us all the time, the geese flying over him and not paying any attention to anything but the dog. He entices them close enough to shoot and three guns account for eleven of them. Not so bad for one little dog.

Now I have tried to describe some of our successful hunts, but don't think that we always have this kind of luck for we don't always succeed.

The sand blows and drifts when there is any wind. It is so fine it gets into the action of your gun and sometimes you cannot work a repeater or automatic at all. Just as you think you will make the biggest kill your gun refuses to work. You get one shot and the geese are flying away and you are working to extract the empty shell. Can you think of anything more exasperating to a hunter?

Some of the best chances we have get away, but I hope the day will never come when I cannot make my annual trip to have a try at the geese.

"OLD RUSTY" AND "THE OUTLAW"

ROSS KINER

IT was in the old days—long before factory-loaded shells were common in the country stores—that Nate bought her. Nate ran a hardware store in the little Illinois town—a sleepy inland village, perched turtle-wise on the edge of the Green River lowlands.

Many's the night I've sat upon a nail keg, big-eyed beside my Grandpa, and watched the old-timers come in after shells; the old ten-gauge ten-pound hammer boys they were. "Nate! Gim'me fifty shells loaded with 3's." Out would come the fifty-hole loading block from its place beneath the counter. In would go the empty cases; then, with funnel and powder-scoop, the five drams of "Eagle Ducking" and the ounce of No. 3 shot (if in sky-scraping pintail time) found their respective places; while, as a bass obligato to the soft tenor Zzzz! of the powder the harsh staccato rattle of the shot, came the Thud-thud-thud--thud! of the mallet on the rammer as Nate forced the black edges home.

Advent of "Old Rusty."

It was the heart of those days that Nate bought Old Rusty. Far from being old and rusty was she when Nate unpacked her, fitted stock and barrels together and snapped the fore-end home. As racy a ten-gauge, thirty-inch Damascus barrels, hammer Parker as one could wish, and many were the complimentary remarks, such as, "She comes up just right," "I'll bet she's a

shooter," etc., etc., and many were the covetous glances I—a barefoot boy—bestowed upon her as she stood new and shining in her spick and span factory dress on the gun-rack near the window.

The Days of Pigeon Shooting.

Those were the days when pigeon shooting was much in vogue —the days when a man facing the traps with a twelve-gauge was laughed at and told to take his pop-gun to the woods and shoot the little sparrows. Old Rusty bore out the prophecies of her many admirers. A shooter she certainly was. If a friend of Nate's missed a bird or two with his own gun and Nate was on the ground (as he almost invariably was), he was asked for the loan of Old Rusty, and if again he missed, no word of condemnation was uttered—no villification of the gun; they knew full well that anywhere within and up to a range of sixty yards Old Rusty, if held aright, was deadly.

I have told you a little of Old Rusty's advent. Of the gun's subsequent life I can tell you little; but I distinctly remember the last time I heard her voice reverberate along the river marsh—the time when she wiped out a cherished hope of mine. It was during the interval between Nate's disposal of the gun and the last time I heard her hollow-throated boom-oom! that all the old duck hunters knew—that she acquired the title of Old Rusty. Going from hand to hand, sometimes for cash, more often in trade—rebored and restocked—she soon became Old Rusty in truth, but she still could slam the 6's as in the days of her polished youth.

Camping on the River.

Bill King and I had been camped on the river since Monday and the luck had gone against us. It was in March, sultry and

warm—much more like May weather than the March of other years. Oh! how we wished for a norther to drive the spring flight back. Our wish was gratified with interest. Saturday morning when I awoke I found an inch of snow upon my blankets —snow that had sifted through the chinks in the weather-beaten shanty; while outside the north wind screamed and howled, tore through the scrub willows and beat with icy breath upon the river's breast.

"Bill! Oh Bill!" I yells. "Git up! It's snowing like the deuce. Hike out! We'll nail that gander today."

"The Outlaw."

"The Outlaw," as the boys called him, was a lone Canadian gander—a giant of his race that had haunted the river bottoms all the preceding Fall and Winter, and, so far, no one had been able to get lead into him—although several of the boys had once in a while taken a crack at him with their rifles, but at extremely long range as he sat alone on some snow-covered field.

Perhaps a mile down-river Hi was camped. A sweeter, gentler spirit and a truer sportsman never lived than Hi—he was a born musician and a crack shot. Hi had that Spring obtained Old Rusty in exchange for a Winchester pump. A born musician I said—why the old time I ever was really homesick for the old town was, when home on a visit, I sat one evening in his barber shop, listening to some of the old waltzes that he played for me on his favorite violin. Hi is "asleep" now (May he rest in peace!) and the heart of me is saddened with the memory of him.

A March Day With the Ducks.

All that day and until about 4 o'clock Bill and I cut pintail, mallard and bluewing out of the scurrying flocks as they drove hither and thither—blinded by the fast falling snow, confused by

the changing wind. About 4 o'clock it cleared away and had stopped snowing, except for an occasional flurry that would form a blue-black cloud against the western sky—miniature snow squalls that would screech and hustle past; then all would be clear again.

The flight had almost ceased and Bill had come over to my blind—a natural one. I had simply dropped down in the thick marsh grass at the mouth of the bayou, kicked around a trifle, and shot from there—anything answered that day with such a storm raging. We were crouched side by side, shivering—debating whether we had better stay a while or head for camp but all the time keeping a close watch in case another bunch should come in sight, when Bill, who was facing west, dropped like a shot.

"Down!" between set teeth he hissed. I did not need the warning; the movement was sufficient. Squirming carefully around, I soon was facing west beside Bill.

"The Outlaw!" Bill whispered, and sure enough, perhaps a mile down-river and a good seventy yards above the marsh, with steady sweep of powerful wings, straight toward us came that gander—etched against the burnished copper of that March sunset and ever drawing nearer.

Fumbling with cold-stiffened fingers for some shells of BB's, we waited—tense with expectation. Of a sudden as we watched —peering Indian-like between the blades of dead slough grass —the Outlaw crumpled. A spurt of fleecy smoke—boo-oom!— and as the report reached us I could have sworn I heard the thump! as that gander crashed stone dead upon the half-cut meadow.

"Come on," growled Bill, staggering stiffly to his feet, "let's hike for camp. Hi and Old Rusty have beat us out!"

AFTER CANVASBACKS AT STORM LAKE, NEBRASKA

JOHN F. PARKS

WHEN I was leaving the house one morning in early October to go to my office, my Chesapeake Bay dog, Rex, danced and cavorted around me.

"Why, what's the matter with you of late, old partner! You, too, seem to be feeling something in this crisp, October air. This has been troubling me, a little, here lately. It must be that the 'pinfeatheritis' in in the air again. Come to think of it, is about the time of the year to expect this disease again, and I reckon we've got it."

Of course we had "it." "It" was in evidence everywhere. See how the leaves have turned from the customary green to the beautiful multi-colored shades of red and brown, mutely testifying to the recent ravages of "Old Jack Frost"! Look at the blue grass on the lawn, which but a few days previous was a beautiful emerald, but which now, alas! is lifeless and the color of old Rexie's coat. Can't you feel that indefinable something in the air that seems to give the average duck hunter of the red-blooded type (and the REAL ones are ALL of that type) a feeling of exhibaration, and makes him tingle from head to foot. Some call this OZONE, but at this season of the year, I am going to call it "duck-zone," and that was just what was the matter with myself and old Rexie. We had the annual contagion, now known as "pinfeatheritis," taken from the air, and the only specific for such a malady is a duck hunt in the "Sand Hills," or some other equally good place.

But, shucks, this is no new disease, so why elaborate on it? Every red-blooded duck hunter in the country gets it every Fall, but he perhaps never knew what it was before. 'Fess up, old comrade of the marsh and stream, you know you get it right along as the seasons roll by, so just remember when it hits you again, it is "pinfeatheritis," and proceed to get it out of your system at once with your annual duck hunt. It might also be in order for me to add at this point, that you will not only get the hankering for the sport out of your system, but the purging process will carry with it a lot of other things that you have been accumulating in your anatomy and you will return to your duties looking the world and its perplexities in the face with a clear, steady eye, a cool brain and the necessary nerves to do the things that God has willed for you to do on this mundane sphere and a heart and a will that will be simply irresistible.

"Now, just be a good boy and stay in the yard, old partner, a little while longer, as I am expecting a message from Harry almost any day now, telling me that the canvasbacks are in, and then, hurrah for another session with the grandest duck that a hunter ever pulled a trigger on." This again addressed to Rex. Do you think he understood me? Well, I don't know whether he did or not, but there seemed to come a gleam of understanding in his beautiful hazel eyes that indicated to me that he was wise to the occasion, and as further evidence that we were thinking in unison, he quietly went up on the front porch, laid down on the foot-rug, and in looking back as I turned the corner of the street, I saw that he still had his eyes glued on my retreating form, indicating that he was still thinking. Yes, Brother Sportsman, the old Chesapeake knew that the time had at last rolled around for our annual duck hunt.

Well, I was expecting the message, and I got it. It read: "The canvasbacks are in. Meet me at Angora on the 15th." Calling up my shooting companion, Bill, to get everything ready for the evening train, we were on our way that night at 6 o'clock

for one of the most enjoyable and successful duck hunts in all my long years of hunting ducks in the country known as the "Sand Hills" of Northwestern Nebraska.

Harry met us according to appointment with his complete outfit of camping paraphernalia, and a shooting friend of his, whom we will call for this occasion, Mack.

The party arrived at Angora in a miserable driving rain-storm, wet to the skin, so we remained at this little hamlet that night and struck out for Storm Lake the next morning, distant about 25 miles.

Harry had with him one of his young English setters and his Chesapeake Bay dog, "Sea Wolf," and Mack brought along his Chesapeake Bay dog, "Bill," which, with my dog "Rex," gave the party a fine outfit of retrievers, a very necessary adjunnct to a successful duck hunt, especially if you are after the elusive canvasback.

On the road over to Storm Lake there are a number of what would be called fine duck lakes in any country other than the Sand Hills, so we stopped over night at Camp Lake and had a very nice evening and morning shoot on mallards, teal, widgeon and gadwalls, also including a few redheads.

Arriving at Storm Lake the following afternoon we ran onto a party of shooters from Sidney, Nebraska, who were just in the act of breaking camp to return home.

The report these gentlemen gave us was encouraging, to say the least. The afternoon before and a day or two preceding that, they informed us that the five in the party had bagged sixty-four of the royal celery eaters, and proceeded to "show" us Missourians that they were not giving us "hot air" on the subject, by producing the birds.

We found a good camping site on the north shore of this lake and proceeded to get everything ready for an indefinite stay. Storm Lake is a very large body of alkali water, divided

in about two equal parts by a sand ridge about a quarter of a mile wide, with large bodies of rushes, wild rice and celery beds in spots throughout both bodies; in fact, there are practically three lakes in this chain, one of them being formed by a promontory jutting out, which divides the west half of the main lake. Under these circumstances, pass shooting is the real thing at this lake and with pits dug in the banks at convenient places, one can shoot to his heart's content at any time the flight is on.

While we had taken a goodly supply of decoys along, with the natural advantages for pass shooting, we decided not to use the decoys only as an incident to the general system of shooting, so we all proceeded that afternoon to occupy the most favorable of the pit locations and try to get onto the natural flyway of the birds.

In going out to the blinds that night, large bodies of canvasbacks and redheads could be seen out in the middle of both the large lakes, together with nearly every other species of ducks sporting themselves in and around the rushes nearer shore. We were soon in our respective pits with the Chesapeakes nestling anxiously and nervously at our feet, when down wind skimmed a large flock of green-wing teal headed for the blind occupied by "Bill," when of a sudden the entire flock seemed to start straight up in the air as they neared "Bill's" blind, but they were not quick enough and two of the little fellows took a header for the ground. At the report from Bill's gun practically every duck on the lakes arose and began to "mill," as we call it out in this cattle country, the canvasbacks and redheads describing a gradually wider circle, at the same time rising higher in the air. When finally the old leader of one of the bunches probably figured that he had the proper elevation to go over the danger points, out of range, headed for Harry's blind. Well, old Mr. Leader has another guess coming concerning elevations. He left two of his family behind as a result.

After this, and until sundown, the flight proved to be intermittent, with mallards, teal, widgeon and gadwall predominating. Occasionally a flock of canvasbacks or redheads would come along, but the main flight of canvasbacks evidently had not arrived as yet, so we went back to camp, very well satisfied with the results of the evening shoot.

Warm Weather Arrives.

The next day it turned quite warm, but remained cloudy and looked like rain, but unfortunately it did not rain, and it was still warmer the next day and for several days following, which made shooting out of the question. About the only thing we could do was to wait for more favorable weather conditions and enjoy ourselves as only duck hunters can around a camp.

After we had been in camp a few days it was discovered that at least three of our party could sing a little and if waterfowl have any instincts for real genuine harmony, they must have enjoyed a season of unusual high-class musical entertainment, with the sweet strains of popular and classical music that floated across the water to them every night.

While lying around camp during the warm days we had plenty of time to think and plan on what we would do when the flight actually commenced. Mack, the hard worker of the party, found an old punt down on the lake and proceeded to rig it up for service, and amused himself by paddling around the lake, chasing flocks of mudhens, getting an occasional shot at a stray canvasback or redhead.

Great Northern Flight of Canvasback Appears.

All things must come to an end in time, the good as well as the bad, so one night the wind shifted to the northwest, blowing like the very Old Harry. When we got up in the morning the

Clyde B. Terrell and a Pair of Skis.
Photo by Courtesy of Clyde B. Terrell.

Waterfowl at Home in Louisiana. Photo by Courtesy of E. A. McIlhenny.

Eugene Terrell After a Day's Sport on Skis at Lake Butte des Morts, Wisconsin.

My First Goose. Photo by Clyde B. Terrell.

elements were spitting a little snow and the sky line was dotted as far as the eye could see with flock after flock of canvasbacks and redheads. If you have never witnessed one of these northern flights of canvasbacks, Brother Sportsmen, you have certainly missed something. Just imagine, seeing line after line of these grand birds flying high up in the air in V-shaped formations, going at the rate of a hundred miles an hour, and when they have passed and repassed the lake several times, they come back for the last time to alight, how they will seem to just let all "holts" go and fairly rain down on the bosom of the lake—as though some one had discharged a large-bored gun into their midst, killing the whole bunch. If you can imagine this, you will have some conception of what the flight looks like.

Well, the flight is in now for a certainty and we must get busy. To insure better results we decided to use only two of the pits on the promontory, with two men in each pit. These pits were located about 150 yards apart and we put out our entire battery of decoys between the two pits.

At about 4 o'clock that afternoon we were all snugly ensconsed in the pits and ready for business. We had not been located very long when suddenly a huge cloud of smoke shoots up from the south end of East Lake, probably from the muzzle of some rancher's ten-bore soft-coal burner, followed by a long-drawn-b-o-o-m, and the first hand in the game had been dealt. Now look out!

See them swirl! The canvasbacks and redheads, as is their custom, fly in a gradually rising circle, while the other species of ducks fly in every direction. Presently the old leader of one of the canvasback flocks decided that he had reached the proper elevation to safely top the danger points and they straighten out and head for our lake. They see the decoys as they come over the high sand dune separating the two lakes and come like chain lightning, but if the old leader felt safe when he left the lake,

he makes the mistake of lowering his columbiad as he tops the sand dune, with the result that when they got to us, they are not over forty yards high. Bang! bang! bang! bang! rings out from the two pits as they come in range, then more bangs as they have passed us. The Chesapeakes get busy and soon a nice bunch of the noble birds lay in the bottom of each pit, a feast for the eyes of the gods.

This experience is repeated probably two or three times during the rest of the afternoon, with an occasional shot at other species of ducks to keep our hands in practice, but we have come for canvasbacks and they are the main issue in the campaign.

The Chesapeakes Hunting the Cripples.

After the flight is over, to my mind, the real fun begins. Making the Chesapeakes get the cripples. Did you ever try to run down a canvasback or redhead with a boat? Yes? Well, you probably found out that it couldn't be done. My experience warrants me in the statement that it is trying to perform the impossible. So we start the Chesapeakes after the cripples, who have made themselves scarce during the bombardment, but they are somewhere on the lake, and it is the mission of Mr. Chesapeake to find them. They do. Here comes an old drake out of the rushes on the south end of the lake with two of the dogs in hot pursuit. The duck makes a bee-line for the other side of the lake and he is "some swimmer," too, let me tell you, for the dogs do not seem to gain on him in the least. The duck sees that he cannot expect to make the other side and get over the strip of land dividing the lakes, so he starts to swim in a circle. This is just what the Chesapeakes want him to do. While one of them follows him, the other one takes a short-cut tack which gets him closer to the bird. Then the other dog repeats this operation until they are nearly on the duck, but Mr. Duck has

no idea of giving up the ghost yet. This makes the dog look foolish, but just for an instant, for the dog dives too, but fails to get the duck, which comes to the surface about twenty yards to the left. They go after him again and he dives once more with about the same result. The duck is now getting tired and after two or three more dives one of the dogs is close enough to grab him after he goes under for the last time and the first live canvasback is retrieved.

This experience is repeated until the lake is practically cleared of crippled ducks, when we gather up our bunch and go back to camp. Yes, Brother Sportsmen, by all means gather in the cripples. This is not only one of the most enjoyable features in connection with a successful duck hunt, but it is also the humane way to look at it. As I view it, it is nothing short of a crime to cripple ducks and let them get away to slowly starve to death and furnish food for the mink, skunk, and other depredators. Should you care to take my advice in the matter of a retriever, there is but one real duck retriever in the world today and that one is the thoroughbred Chesapeake Bay dog. A dog that can be depended upon to get a crippled duck under any condition of weather or environment. He knows no such thing as fear. He will brave the coldest water—break ice if necessary to get his bird—and when he does get it, if he is *your* dog, *you* will surely get that particular bird and no one else will get it without putting up a scrap of the first magnitude. So I say, retrieve your crippled ducks by all means, and I have found in my long experience in duck hunting that the best and surest means of getting them is with the trained Chesapeake Bay dog. For instance, we kept track of the cripples that we got down on this hunt and the total loss was not to exceed three per cent, which is practically *nil*.

We spent three or four days longer at this lake after the flight of canvasbacks began, but our experiences were about the same as the first day, being varied more or less as to actual detail. In returning by way of the lakes on the way back to the station, we had some of the best shooting of the trip. And for expert retrieving, we enjoyed some work that the dogs did that we do not think can ever be surpassed.

To summarize and in conclusion, it was my good fortune to again spend about two weeks in company with three loyal kindred spirits whose every thought and action had for its object my personal comfort and pleasure, and the memory of which will linger with me until these old eyes of mine are too dim to see the length of my gun barrels and the old machinery of my physical being fails to respond to the spirit within—then and not till then will the memory fade.

A LUCKY HALF HOUR WITH THE BLUEWINGS

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON

BLUEWING teal are first of the migratory ducks to be on the move south in the Fall and the last to return north in the Spring. The bluewing teal is a splendid little bird but one rarely has opportunity to shoot them over decoys as they do not remain in Northern latitudes after the weather gets severe. I have not hunted them in the South. In the North I have at times seen them in such large flocks they resembled huge swarms of bees.

The incident I am about to relate occurred just before our present bag limit was in force in Illinois.

One beautiful day in our grandest month, October, I was rowing up the Des Plaines River a short distance above its mouth and on the lookout for some bluewings. A stretch of the river here for several miles is a favorite resort of the little beauties. There are here little coves and bayous bordered with rushes and there are numerous pond-lilies, water-cress and other aquatic plants growing along its borders. There are also little ponds at various points not far from the river and these ponds are a favorite resort of these dainty little birds.

Coming around a bend in the river I was within gunshot of a small flock of bluewings before they had seen me or I had seen them. As they arose from the water I seized my gun and killed one with the first barrel and two with the second.

At the report of the gun a large flock of bluewings flew out from the opposite shore some distance above me and alighted in

the middle of the river. There was at least fifty or sixty in the flock.

They did not seem to be greatly alarmed and I quietly worked my boat into shore out of their sight and gradually dropped along close to shore down stream and around the bend. Here I could row without their seeing me so long as I did not go out into the river any distance. They had quieted down and swum into shore and were apparently undisturbed and had evidently no thoughts of their enemy, man. If I could get a shot into that flock I would surely get some birds, for bluewing teal fly closer together than almost any of our ducks.

I dropped down the river about a quarter of a mile and was then able to cross over to the same side of the river where the ducks were but was nearly a half mile from them and out of their sight on account of the bend in the river. Rowing into shore, I slipped some shells into the pockets of my hunting coat, and drew the boat up on the bank safely. I had marked about where the flock was located by trees on the opposite bank, the banks being heavily wooded on this portion of the Des Plaines.

Making a Stalk on Bluewings.

Going back into the woods a sufficient distance I made a *detour* of about a quarter of a mile and came out again cautiously toward the river.

Sure enough, there they were directly opposite me and I had judged it about right. Being careful not to tread on any dry sticks to alarm them, I gradually worked within about thirty-five yards of them, as near as I could estimate the distance. It is against my principles to take pot shots, and I rarely shoot a bird on the water, but the flock was so closely bunched together I could not resist shooting the first barrel at them on the water. I fired a shot at where they seemed to be gathered the thickest,

and as the air appeared to be full of ducks at the report, I fired my second barrel into the midst of the bunch. There were seven or eight of the little beauties as a result lying on the surface of the water and giving a few last spasmodic flutters of their wings and kicking their feet. The balance of the flock flew on up the river out of sight.

Being in no hurry to retrieve them, as my boat was down stream and they would float towards it anyway, I reloaded my gun and stood on the river bank a few moments.

Another Flock Swiftly Appears.

Glancing up the river, all at once I saw a flash of blue and white wings approaching me swiftly. A flock of teal were coming down the river at top speed and they were not apparently the same flock I had just fired at. I dropped down out of sight and they swung right in over the ducks lying on the water but did not seem to have any intention of stopping. They were within easy range, however, and I hastily got in both barrels in two cross-firing shots as they whizzed by me. There was a succession of splashes as a number of birds fell dead into the river near the others.

I reloaded again and was about to start down to get my boat when a third flock appeared around the bend coming down the river and, my dead ducks perhaps acting somewhat as decoys, they swung in over them and I had two more shots at fairly close range.

When I came up with my boat to pick the ducks up and counted them I found that I had, including the three previously killed, thirty-two bluewing teal, all killed in less than a half hour, and no cripples.

Feeling somewhat guilty and thinking I had depopulated the duck family enough for one day, I moved out into the stream and started down the river for home, ten miles away.

BLUEBILL SHOOTING FROM A FLOATING BLIND ON SAN FRANCISCO BAY

JOSEPH S. RUGLAND

AT various loccations on San Francisco Bay, at low tide. large areas of "flats" are bared, and to these feeding grounds the bluebill move, always making some sort of a morning and evening flight.

Located in the midst of these flats and out of gunshot of each other, brush blinds, both of the stationary and "floater" type are built and all shooting done over wooden decoys. The stationary blinds referred to are built of lumber thirty feet in length, these sticks being driven into the mud and sand about four to six feet deep, with five sticks on each side and plenty of room between for a duck boat. The sticks are then well braced to stand rough weather, care being taken also not to offer too much resistance to the tide. A platform sufficient in size to accommodate two or three hunters is built high and dry above high water and it is from this stand that the shooting is done.

While shooting from a stationary blind affords a most comfortable means of duck hunting, it has to its disadvantage the fall of the tide, on such occasions the hunters being high above the decoys; also it is necessary to make difficult and dangerous climbs from the duck boat to the platform above. For these reasons, and others, I prefer the "floater" type of duck blind.

Always on the level with the water, the shooter soon becomes accustomed to the frequent bobbing and jumping of his float,

and it is on rare occasions that a shot is missed that can be traced to this cause. Of course, there are various types of these "floaters" used; in all cases, however, some sort of a solid floating foundation is laid and the blind built upon same, including a small "house" for shelter in rainy weather. The duck boat is pulled up on the float and hidden from sight.

Large Flock of Decoys Gives Best Results.

Shooting on a broad expanse of bay water requires quite a few decoys to pull the ducks, from thirty to fifty being usually used. These decoys are invariably set in a V-shaped line, about twenty yards from the blind, and in a straight row. You will see from this arrangement that the decoys will appear as a large flock to ducks swinging in on either side and to an incoming bird as a flock of ducks feeding. Dried palm leaves are used to disguise the blind, appearing as a small island to birds approaching from any direction.

It is with a feeling of pleasure that I recall numerous duck hunts this season from my floating blind anchored in the bay.

A dark day, with plenty of rain and a stiff southeast wind sweeping the bay is certain to make the bluebill leave the open water and seek the shelter of the bay shores, and the hunters lucky enough to be out on such a day are sure of wonderful sport.

I recall, recently, just such a day, when thousands of bluebill and canvasback ducks were moving. With my partner, I set out fifty bluebill and canvasback decoys before daylight in the manner previously described. We were in the blind and ready at dawn but must observe the Federal Law regarding migratory birds, so we contented ourselves until sunrise watching large flocks of bluebill making for open water. Over our heads, and hundreds of them within gunshot, flew flock after flock of ducks, disturbed

in their early morning feeding by hunters leaving for their respective blinds. Occasionally reminded of our purpose of being out so early in the morning by a bluebill or two alighting among the decoys, somehow or other the time passed and with a last look at our watches we agree it is time to shoot.

Bluebills Now Begin to Move.

We have not long to wait. The wind steadily increased in velocity, and the ducks not wishing to ride the rough water in discomfort commenced to return, seeking sheltered spots to await the ebb of the tide.

A flock of bluebill circled about and came up into the wind and with wings outstretched attempted to alight among the decoys. Of course, we were ready and three of the beauties were left behind. It is no small matter to retrieve dead ducks on such days, as the wind and waves carry them along in speedy fashion and when picked up and placed in a boat the combined efforts of two hunters are necessary to row the duck boat when returning to the blind against the weather. Numerous trips after dead ducks, however, add to the excitement of the sport.

High in the air, fighting their way against the wind, a flock of bluebill, twenty or more, were flying southward. I whispered to my partner to remain still and with the duck-call gave two long flutter-like calls of the bluebill. But to no avail, it at first seemed. Another call seemed to reach them, for the leader began swerving downward at amazing speed, followed by the other ducks, with dips and circles too beautiful to describe, and which only a duck hunter can appreciate. But at last they came within a few feet of the water and circled impatiently about the blind. Now with a final circle that showed their beautiful white upturned breasts the birds turned toward the south, probably attracted by another hunter's decoys. Flying in a straight line they

passed directly over his decoys and when the hunter raised up to shoot, the bluebill made frantic efforts to escape. I discerned three splashes in the water, indicating three dead ducks, while the remaining birds climbed high in the air and made for San Pablo Bay.

With a parting glance at the fast disappearing bluebill we resumed our positions in the blind and again turned our eyes to the open bay.

Our attention was attracted to three bluebills with wings set, which came in high from the back. No call was needed to encourage them, as their actions indicated their desire to decoy. Anxiously we awaited their coming and slowly reached for our guns for not a second could be lost, if, when at the outside of the decoys they decided not to decoy and wheel off at amazing speed, greatly aided by the wind.

Straight in they came, looking for comfortable places to alight, and when well within the decoys we arose in unison, each killing a bird with the first barrel and the third was crumpled in midair from a well-directed shot from my partner.

So the day passed, and when sunset came, regretfully we picked up the decoys and rowed for shore, meanwhile listening to the whistling of wings of bluebill passing over us and reviewing to ourselves the occurrences of the day.

A Good Day's Sport.

New Year's Day was the beginning of a severe storm which lasted forty-eight hours, passing the full length of California, raising havoc in general. According to old settlers, it was the worst storm in twenty-six years.

The gale from the north drove the ducks down from Oregon and other northern points in great numbers. I never saw so many ducks in my life. San Francisco Bay and adjoining waters were literally alive with canvasbacks and bluebills.

It rained heavily and incessantly all day. I had a limit shoot of twenty-five birds, bluebills and canvasbacks, shooting from my "floater" on the bay. I had canvasbacks in my bag that weighed nearly five pounds. Some bird, that!

When the Hunter Was Hunted.

A few years ago I had a most unusual experience while hunting on a small island, in Suisun Bay.

This island is probably about two miles in circumference and is full of sink-holes and covered with tule grass. At this time the island was infested with a most peculiar sort of wild hogs. I recall an occasion when I had an encounter with them while out shooting mallards.

It was the custom to walk through the tules and as the birds rose in the air, shoot them. A sort of "jumping" ducks, as it were. While busily engaged in watching for ducks and sink-holes at the same time I was surprised to see a small hog come out in a clearing and emitting pitiful squeals. These I did not pay any attention to until the wild boars and sows commenced to gather and began advancing towards me. I took to the nearest willow tree close by.

While perched in the tree I shot twelve of them, some with tusks three to four inches long. Finally my partners hearing the continuous shooting came in my direction, driving the hogs away and affording relief from my predicament. There is no question but there might have been serious results if the tree had not been at hand and the arrival of my hunting partners, for which I was very grateful.

Shortly after this a shooting club bought the island. They organized hog drives at night with flaming torches. Something like 300 were killed before they were exterminated. It is very singular how such animals could get on the island, which is two miles from the mainland.

BLIND AND BATTERY SHOOTING ON PAMLICO SOUND

HORATIO BIGELOW

PAMLICO Sound is probably one of the most interesting bodies of water for wildfowl in the country. It is 110 miles long and 25 miles wide. On the beach side the water is from six feet to four and one-half feet in depth, and this is the feeding place and home of ducks, geese, brant and swans, made happy by the sandy muddy bottom, solid with a super-abundance of wild celery.

While brant and broadbill (bluebill) predominate, there are many redheads and butterballs, black ducks, mallards, sprigs, widgeon, canvasbacks and geese and swans.

Between Oregon and New Inlets, forty miles north of Cape Hatteras and near the eastern shore of Pamlico Sound, lies Pea Island. The greater part of the island is owned by a shooting club and there I brought the "Dude" to let "Cap'n Jesse," the club keeper, initiate him into the mysteries of duck and goose shooting.

An uneventful trip from New York, by way of Cape Charles and Norfolk, landed us with our guns and shooting "duds" at Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Here we boarded another boat for Manteo, Roanoke Island. Roanoke Island is twelve miles long and three miles wide, surrounded by Roanoke, Croatan, Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds. At Manteo we were met by "Cap'n" Jesse Etheridge, the club keeper, who guided us to the Tranquil House, where we put up for the night.

The next morning, after breakfast, Cap'n Jesse set us, with our shooting togs, aboard the club's motor boat and got under

way about 11 o'clock for Pea Island. This motor boat was a sharpie, with a six-horse-power engine, and, though slow, was well adapted to the shallow waters of Pamlico Sound around Pea Island, as she only drew eight inches of water, despite a twenty-two-inch propeller.

Many Thousands of Waterfowl.

Few fowl were sighted on our way down the sound until we arrived off the "Fish House," some five miles from Pea Island. A flock of swans off Bodie Island is all that I recollect. These big birds looked like a fringe of snow along the shore of the marsh, but as we approached and they flopped heavily off, we saw what they were. From the Fish House to the island we saw raft after raft of wildfowl, thousands and thousands of geese and tens of thousands of ducks. Along the sky line the great masses of moving fowl looked like clouds of smoke from some distant factory, and the roar of their wings, as the huge rafts broke up at our nearer approach, sounded much like distant thunder.

In the meantime Pea Island and its small group of buildings had been getting nearer and nearer, and at last we dropped our anchor in the shallow creek near the clubhouse.

At about 5:30 the next morning we were called and we got into our shooting duds. Cap'n Jesse said the tide was very low, and this, with the ice along the shore, did not look very hopeful. After breakfast we placed our crates of decoys on a two-wheeled cart, clucked to the ony, and we started for Goat Island, where one of the boxes was located. We got our eighteen live geese and eight black duck decoys staked out about sunrise, and then waited for something to happen. The wind was blowing strong from the northwest and cold—it was impossible to keep warm. We saw numerous flocks of ducks and geese, but all were flying outside; none came our way. We lighted our pipes and sat

back for a quiet smoke. "Honk, honk, ah-honk!' We dropped our pipes and peered cautiously through the sedge in front of the box. We saw a single goose moving in our direction up over the beach. The decoys began to call loudly and the wild goose to answer. We crouched low in the box and waited for a shot. The big bird circled around back of us and then came down with the wind over the decoys. "Let him have it!" I cried and gave him both barrels of the old eight-gauge, while the "Dude" emptied his twelve at the same target. The old goose was so near that he looked as big as a house, but there must have been lots of space around him, as none of the BB's seemed to stick. When we last saw him he was making good time toward Hatteras.

About noon we went back to the clubhouse. We did not go out any more that day.

The next day conditions seemed more auspicious. We put out our stand of live geese decoys and black ducks again. As we walked down the beach to our positions, great flocks of ducks and geese got up along the shore, and many of them dropped down in the sound about a quarter of a mile out from our stand. We could hear the geese gabbling and honking at a great rate, while we sat crouched down in the stand, and waited for some of them to come in. At last our decoys began to do a lot of calling on their own account, stretching their necks out towards the sound.

"One of these geese sounds pretty close," said the Dude, and peeking out through the fringe of sedge in front of our box, we could see that the strong breeze was driving a raft of geese towards the beach. Most of them drifted in very slowly and finally stopped several hundred yards from shore; but one old gander kept swimming towards us. When he came to the ice at the edge of the water he hesitated for a few minutes, while the decoys called to him loudly, as if to say, "Come ahead, it's

all right." This seemed to reassure him, as he waddled ahead, carefully picking his way through the ice toward his seeming friends. As I stood up to shoot, he rose with a frightened honk and started back toward the sound. I shot under him with my first barrel, but dropped him dead at the water's edge with my second.

After bringing him in, we lighted cigars to celebrate our first goose, and sat back to wait for more. A loud honk now caused us to look up, only to crouch low again as a lone goose swung in from back of us and lighted among the decoys. I had better luck this time and killed him with my first barrel.

During the afternoon the tide fell rapidly, and though the Dude and I each got a single goose, it was more from good luck than anything else, as the conditions were most unfavorable.

"We'll try the battery tomorrow, boys," said Cap'n Jesse, when we got back to the clubhouse that night.

The next day was much warmer, with little or no wind stirring when we started with the motor boat and the battery outfit. The latter consisted of a large flat-bottomed skiff carrying a shallow battery and some three hundred redhead and broadbill decoys, and a small shoving skiff for "tending" the battery. There was no bag limit here at that time. The sale of game has only been prohibited since 1918.

The Market Shooter At Home.

When we passed the sharpie of Randy Farrell, the market shooter, Randy was standing with his head out of the hatchway smoking an after-breakfast pipe, and we sung out, "What luck, yesterday?"

He grinned, pointed to a string of ducks hanging from the rigging, and grunted, "Sixty-three."

We grinned back with thoughts of killing a few ourselves that day, and asked Payne where he was going to "tie out."

"Jack Shoal, sir, I reckon," said he, "I'm going to put you where we've killed about all our redheads this season."

"All right, Payne, that sounds good to us," we agreed Soon we were sitting waiting in the motor boat while Payne and Eddie tied out the battery.

The Dude tossed up a coin to determine whether he or I went in first, as we were to have two-hour relays. He won, and lay back in the narrow coffin-shaped box.

"Keep well down, sir," called out Payne, and we chug-chugged away in the motor-boat and dropped anchor half a mile to leeward.

Farrell had tied out his battery on Rock Shoal, a mile or more to windward of us, and we could occasionally hear his bang! bang! but nothing from the Dude. Several bunches of redheads seemed to us to fly over his stool, but no shots.

A Lone Black Brant.

A long black brant flew over the battery. A faint puff of smoke, a sharp crack, and the wary bird struck the water with a tremendous splash. The Dude waved to us vigorously to show how he had scored, and, standing up, shot once again at the brant, which he had winged with his first barrel. This time the bird's head dropped and it drifted slowly toward us.

Soon a large flock of broadbill swung by, high up in the air, but just as it seemed as if he would not get a shot, the tail of the flock dropped right down into his decoys. The Dude shot twice and then once more. Two that time. A flock of redheads then fley by, and the Dude shot one, and later killed a single redhead which he jumped up from among his decoys.

Soon it was my turn. "Now you'll get a chance to kill some," said Payne, as the tender pushed off.

Good Sport From the Battery.

Soon the ducks began to come—all broadbills. They would show up on my left and fly along as if they did not see the stool until they got back of me, and then would sweep down over me like a flock of bullets. I shot again and again without getting one. Two birds down when I should have killed a dozen or fifteen! Disgusted, I signaled to the Dude to take my place before my time was up, and he killed a few more in good shape.

Then, as we had a long ways to go, we had to take up the decoys just when the birds were flying thickest. In thirty-five minutes all the decoys were in the skiff, and the battery aboard and tied down. Pretty quick work for two men.

The next two days we shot out of the battery under much the same conditions—a fair southwest breeze half the day, with the duck moving; followed by a flat calm, with little doing.

On the following morning I had the first two hours in the battery, and though the breeze was very slight, the fowl were moving well. The first shot killed a single broadbill and the next two shots a pair of the same species. Then as the tail of a big flock swept over the decoys from the left, I killed one with each barrel, and repeated the performance as another bunch swung by from the right. Then I tried a long shot at a single redhead flying outside the decoys and missed, and ended up with a pair of redheads—one to each barrel. This was the best shooting I had ever done from a battery, and I was consequently elated—though, of course, the ducks stooled well and the battery was practically in calm water.

Our Banner Day.

Friday was the best day of the trip. We killed five brant and thirty ducks that day, and I was the lucky man who was in the battery when the ducks were flying thickest, during the noon

spell. In a little over an hour I killed sixteen ducks and two brant. I was not shooting as well as the day before, but killed at least one every time I sat up. With an automatic gun I should probably have killed twenty-five ducks.

Two Truly Remarkable Shots.

Two shots I recall especially. One was at a brant that was flying outside the decoys on my left. I gave him both barrels and he still flew on, but in a most peculiar manner. He kept swooping up and down, up and down, rolling heavily from side to side, and finally fell dead in the sound a full half-mile from the battery. The other shot was at a single broadbill that hurried by on my right. He was going so fast that I could hardly get my gun on him before he was back of my head, and I fired without seeing him at all over the barrels; but he crumpled up stone dead.

These three days in the battery netted us eighty ducks. Also six black brant, which we were much pleased to kill, as neither of us had ever shot one before. We also had twelve geese that we shot earlier in the week, and we killed two more each on Saturday.

We were certainly sorry to leave the place, and decided that mighty few Winters in future would pass by that did not find us at the old stand.

AN OUTING WITH THE GRAYS IN MANITOBA

ANDREW A. ALFORD, M. D.

THE last touches of Summer had faded and calm and many colored Autumn was about to reign supreme among the grain fields, and on the marshes of the Canadian West. It was the time of the year when the lure of the wild calls with outstretched arms to the man that is a lover of dog and gun, to leave his civilized haunts to journey out into the vast uncovered prairie.

In this region our greatest sport is undoubtedly goose shooting. We decided to go. As to our party it was the same old one of many years, still hung together. Captain in command, Bob as first lieutenant, with Bill and myself as adjutants, made up the party. We choose as our means of locomotion a "Ford," famed as the only car for such an escapade as goose hunting, where time and again you take to the air unintentionally to avoid a piece of rough prairie trail—it is the car ideal for the job.

We left the old ranch at 4 in the morning, as we had a strip of road to head off before the Wawa tribe would leave the lake for breakfast.. It was our object to locate the flight in the morning and get in for the fun at the afternoon flight. We soon had two hours of darkness and thirty miles of road unravelled, but still there was road ahead; but 7 o'clock found us in a good position to see what the ideas of the feathery biplanes were that morning.

We were not detained long in waiting, for far to the south the faint but ever distinct sounds of the scouting flock were heard as they left the old lake for the feeding grounds to the north.

Bob picked up the glasses and after some peering into the dark-colored horizon, the misty specks of gray appeared.

Closer they came, passed high overhead and were soon lost to view in the northern sky. Another battalion took a like course and then a continuation of the gray lines were kept up. Where were they going? Cap to the rescue—ever trained from the early eighties in the science of goosedom—had sized up the situation and knowing the country was well aware of the place where they were going to feed. Distance with a machine is not at all troublesome; but the same is true of wings and the pursued had it on the Ford just a little. After an hour we caught up. They were here—lots of them, the biggest bunch of grays I had seen for many moons.

We Do Justice to Our Breakfast.

We lunched before we had left the ranch, but by now we were beginning to feel the pags of hunger again, so we directed our attention to the cause, and the grub box was decided upon as the "cure." We would take in the situation while we ate breakfast. It was always on Cap that we relied to put the spice in the grub line, and it was upon him that the honor fell, while the rest of us assisted. Breakfast this time had to take the place of dinner, so accordingly there was an excavation in the grub box when it was concluded. We now felt better towards ourselves but worse for the geese.

The day was going. Short October days soon waste to evening, and as the goose tribe feed earlier as the Fall wears on, we had not much time to spare. The geese had left the field half an hour before. The great battalion of grays went off in three

divisions strung out over a couple of miles of prairie. We had anticipated the place where they would go off. This is where so many hunters make a mistake—they would have been there and given them a farewell with chilled shot which would have left such lasting impressions that the geese would not have returned to feed. We were too old at the game to make any such blunder and allowed them their peaceful meal, hoping down in our hearts that we might make it more entertaining for them in the afternoon.

The time had arrived for us to get busy, putting in our line of trenches, underground work and the such like. War with geese in modern times must be carried on along the same lines as war with men. We chose as our location the slope of rising ground on the field where they had fed, facing the south and backed up by the ever-increasing northwest wind which was going to be of so much service to us in making them "sweep the stubble." You might get a few geese with a calm but you will never make a kill without a gale. Try it. I have time and again with poor results. We dug ourselves in, to use a military expression much in use not long ago. We used as breastwork for our pits picked stubble, which gave things a very smooth appearance. Everything must bear an even and smooth line to be inviting to the eye of the goose if he is not going to show his timidity.

The underground forts at last reached completion, and we were ready for eventualities. Cap's pit was large, for it took a lot of space to hide his large quantity of avoirdupois, and to my idea it looked more like an old-time barracks than a blind on the goose grounds. Cap never was so careful to see that things were smooth; but at the same time he was always there with his share at the end. He schooled our gang in the rudiments as well as the finer points of the game. All set. Bob and I were each armed with a pair of binoculars and it was not

slow the way that we hunted up cobwebs three miles away and quite often called them geese. As for the real thing there did not seem to be any.

Geese Appear At Last.

Bob at last picked up a small flock, five in number, coming on north, but from the way they were meandering along it looked as though they had lost the road—at any rate the road that led to our decoys. They at last went out of sight and it was not a little strange that it dampened our feelings, for it usually happens that where the first bunch goes the rest follow. We waited. From our blinds was an excellent view to the south, and with the aid of the glasses we could see toward the lake for ten miles. At last another regiment came from out the gray horizon—they were miles away yet and with the glasses it was impossible to tell how their minds were made up. "Believe they are coming our way," said Bob. It was true enough. Miles had passed and they were at last in our field.

Enjoys Renewing Acquaintance With the Geese.

It was good to see those great birds coming on after being away from them for two long years. On they came until they were yards away. From the arrangements of our pits and decoys the geese would naturally go between our blinds and give us side shooting. These were in no way different from others; their ideas were like ours. By now they were only a hundred yards out, wings soared, legs outstretched, yes, even now their toenails were in sight. Would the suspense ever be over? All anxious to feed—it was now only a question of who would sample the first head of wheat. Alas! what changes soon take place! What a moment ago was a great battalion of grays moving along in order were now scattered, boring and gyrating off

in every direction, after the contents of four double-barreled shot-guns had done their work. After excitement, smoke and geese had cleared away, what next? Five lifeless grays dead in the stubble. "Pretty good for a start," said Cap, and all agreed.

The afternoon sport had begun. Did it feel good? I can vouch for that. We were ready to hit anything with feathers on it after that sort of start. Bob still stayed at the outlook. In a second orders run, "Mark south!" We looked around and there they were, coming along nicely. Five fine big fellows those. "Can we get the flock?" put in Bob. "Be a gentleman," put in Bill, "three will do." The little bunch were flying in a sort of choppy fashion. You know, everybody does who has been on the goose trail much, how a bunch of geese wink and flutter in their flight when they do not know exactly where they are and expect every moment that a volley of lead will rise from the stubble. These fellows had heard the previous cannonade and you could not blame they for being shaky. They made up their minds, however, not to alight, but to fly over the decoys in their pursuit of the previous flock. A splendid shot they offered us. Forty yards up, just five geese, four guns, eight shots, and a solitary goose kept on going north. "Guess everybody's got his eye today," and it looked so.

Nine out of two flocks looked good! However, we wanted more and anyway there were twenty times that many geese to come out, reckoning on what went in. "Mark east" some one shouted. Three hundred yards out were a hundred wavies, working up against the decoys. "Those devils won't decoy," put in Bob, but we gave them a chance and in less time than it takes to change your mind they were upon us. A long-drawn-out undulating flock at our gun ends. When the atmosphere cleared—not much damage done—a single white snowball had faded, that was all.

"Same darn luck," shot off Bob, "those white janglers skin us every time even when we get them in range."

"I don't see how I missed mine; he was right at the end of my gun; those shells must be bad," put in Cap.

Bill and I would willingly have offered a similar excuse, but Cap had called it early and saved us.

Things slacked. What happened! Wo soon found out. A mob of grays had slipped in to the east of us, and had chosen a new feeding ground. "Guess the jig is up," Bob grumbled out, and he was nearly right. When a mob of geese get on a field and keep spilling their music on the air, it is by way of choice the place for the remainder of the flight for the day. There was no bettering of our position; we would wait where we were for the remainder of the day, hoping to even up matters somewhat next morning. We would no doubt pick up an odd old scout, who would be looking for information at first hand regarding counterfeit decoys. Just then a flock appeared in view from the north borne down by the wind. They were high up. "Migrators," suggested Bill, and with their eyes fixed on southern California the geese passed by and were soon swallowed up in the southern sky. "Looks as though these fellows wouldn't stay much longer; getting too cold for them down there, east." I peered through the stubble which fringed the top of my pit. There, sure enough, were a pair of white chaps nosing along, stubble high, right in the direction of our blinds. Were they going to decoy? No, no chance, they were out scouting, and our blinds, thanks to luck, happened to be in their invisible course. Bang! bang! only two shots from Cap's old Smith and the living "snow balls" were lifeless among the decoys. Another course of the excitement over. Would we get any more? Cap was optimistic, although the afternoon was fading into evening.

"South! Grouse!" A flock of them came cruising along at a fifty-mile clip—veritable bombs to hit. Everybody had a shot at them, which in all cases except one turned out to be misses. Hard luck, only one grouse out of fifty. "How did I miss them?" queried Bill. I kept silent. Enough said. Another link in our shoot was complete.

Geese Leave For Roosting Place.

Away to the east of us over the hills against the ruddy sky large squads of geese were leaving the field for the lake, spilling their broken clang on the still evening air, which in turn wafted to our ears. This is the time of day during which the man who shoots, reflects. The day is gone; it has brought its own pleasures, and yet within it all there is a feeling of loneliness and sadness when one hears the varied sounds of the Wawa tribe going home for the night. Then there is the feeling of uncertainty about the game that gives it its "pep," and which looms up filling your breast, and you wonder if they will return after the cruel persecution which had been given them such a short time before.

We were through for the day. Gathered up the munitions and with guns, geese, decoys and what not packed on our shoulders we were soon on our way to the Ford, which had been waiting at a near-by bush. Things were soon stored away and the old machine was purring away, cutting off the miles in the direction of the location where the geese had fed, and where we intended to renew acquaintances next dawn.

Now was to come one of the branches of the hunting tree which I get more real enjoyment out of than the mere killing of the game. We drove into a little willow swale beside the road and began to prepare for the night. Supper was the first thing to impress itself upon us. A smart little blaze was soon going in the edge of the trees. It lent a comfortableness to our sur-

roundings. Next the little kettle was humming off "ditties" of former trips. Cap was in charge; he made the tea and "poured" it. The grub box was soon exploited and we were soon in the midst of "Dinner on the goose trail." Cap's "scrambled egg special," with toast and butter, soon found the right place. Everybody threw "roses" at him that night for his ability to make camp lunch. Our repast was soon over and we sat around the fading fire watching it in the dark as the flickering tongues would reach out, then die as Cap would replenish it from time to time. He did most of the camp work, for he dearly loved it, and it made him tired to see greenhorns at a job he knew so well. We perambulated back over the happenings of the afternoon; shot these two wavies again; did it all again till we were tired and the greatest blessing of the outdoor enthusiast, sleep, was about to overtake us. We spread down our quilts upon the ground, making a comfortable shake-down for four. This is one of the most important things about hunting—get your sleep or you won't enjoy shooting. A bed is always easily made, and when tired you can usually sleep anywhere. A straw or hay stack is hard to beat with a few blankets, and I have on one or two occasions slept till the geese coming in the morning woke me up with their calling.

After placing the tent over us scout fashion, we each fell into our place in the bed and were soon wool gathering. My nervous mechanism was keyed up pretty highly, being anxious to know what we would do next morning, and I was sure that I would awake. We were asleep. Bob woke up near midnight in the throes of a nightmare, exclaiming, "Shoot him, Bill! Shoot him! I'll pick him up," and at this endeavored to leave the bed to retrieve his "What not," but when he woke up he was a bit chagrined and quietly settled down and finished the night.

Making Preparations Next Morning.

The next morning Bill woke us up at 5:30, and we were all soon astir. Pits to dig, stubble to pull and other tasks as well. Being close to the field, we had only a short distance to go. We got the location all right, with "goose blooms," or feathers, to any liking, of one night's growth.

This done we set at underground work again. Cap took to one spade while Bob took to the other. It was hard digging. "Devilish stuff," said Bob, and went on, "those fellows knew how good the digging was here or they would not have fed here. Those fellows will pay for this. My leg is an inch shorter pushing this shovel," and Bob measured himself into a hole about eighteen inches deep and a foot and a half across. It was adamant. I did not hear Cap's consideration on the subject, but can promise you that they were interesting, and oh! how he would promise and repromise himself how he would even up with the cackling brethren. Finally we finished, and the greatest bunch of scarecrows you ever saw on a field was the result, yet it was here that we were to stake our chances.

Daylight soon began to show gray in the east, followed by the ruddy tinge of the sun following in the dawn. It is now when a chill comes over you, and you ask yourself why in Hades are not at home in bed, instead of persecuting the innocent. Your only answer is that it is the lure of it. "I can't help it."

"They will soon be here if they are coming," Bob announced. Yes, away to the east we heard the sounds of the early risers and then the first long line serpent-like line came into view against the eastern sky.

"Coming this way,' said Bill. Their long-resounding notes were coming closer, as they traveled along, on the still morning air. Closer and closer. Yes, from the tone of their conversation, a conference was on foot as to what fool-headed geese were feeding so close to such dangerous looking objects as our blinds.

A little more excited discussion as to which side of the field they would take, and then further questioning as to who had seen those upheavals the previous evening. "It looked bad," thought the leader, and "I shall avoid it; we will feed at a safe distance from here and walk over later in the morning and interview our friends." And they did. Very smooth indeed, but can you imagine our size? "No." Atoms were mountains. What were we to do? Not look on at any rate. The newcomers were better decoys than ours, and they were no doubt better callers, although Bill thought that he was "Real good." "Put them up," said Cap, and Bob took a shot at them with the rifle. Away they went.

We Now Try Something New.

We would try a new stunt. We each ran to a nearby straw stack, took all the straw we could carry, and in a few minutes made a dozen other blinds similar to our own at different places in the field. Back to our old forts out of breath. What would the result be? We would soon find out. The geese naturally would think that there could not be a man in every blind and hence would probably decoy. Along same six "laughers" with their tee! tee! he! ee! Nothing semed wrong and they were hungry for breakfast. They sighted the decoys, cut their wings, outstretched their legs. Nothing to it; they were going to alight. No, no. Cap was out for revenge, as were the other members of the quartette. Did they get it? Only partially. Two fine big speckled fellows fell in among the decoys, while another, badly wounded, went down half a mile up the field.

More coming east. On they came. This was the feeding ground. "If we only had good pits we would kill a bunch," put in Bill. Swish! whif! whif! whif! and the wings were right on top of us again. I tried to turn around in the pit, a volley passed my ear, an excited volume of goose cries, a

shower of goose blooms and that was all. "Watch that flock!" shouted Bill, "I hit a fellow there!" Just then a goose's wings went together and he came down like a brick. "He's dead; we'll get him later," and we did. Then a shower of adjectives emanated from a nearby blind which is no uncertain manner gave you a very good word picture of our blinds. I concurred. I wished at times I was a grasshopper, so that I could have gotten rid of the lower half of my anatomy.

"Get down!" Yes, another regiment in sight. They were coming straight on. Cap saw them first and I was unable to locate the way they were coming. At last I heard them, and almost at the same instant Cap gave the word to give it to them. Fooled again! Cap rose up to shoot, hearing some wings close to him, which turned out to be a flock of pintail ducks just ahead of the geese. The geese, of course, were wise and gave us the go-by. Well, those "sharp-ended" ducks came in for some harsh criticism. But while we were in the midst of this another bunch of grays came in sight. Surely nothing would mar our chances this time. We could all see them. It was our chance if we could only hit them, and I made up my mind to do it for myself. In between the pits they came. A sound like artillery rolled forth. "Evened up at last," said Cap, as he went out with a deal of satisfaction and gathered up seven fine Hutchins. We were satisfied if we got no more. The morning was getting on, with a terrific wind rising and banks of clouds rolling over from the northwest.

"Guess it is all over," said Cap, and we pulled up stakes. We got our material loaded up and then took a few moments to eat lunch. We were soon on our way home, everybody satisfied that we had a good shoot, had enough game to make it worth while, and yet not be "game hogs," and promised ourselves that we would return again and pay our old haunts a call at some future date.

ON FAR-FAMED LITTLE RIVER

JOHN B. THOMPSON

LITTLE River, in southeast Missouri, where unrestricted by banks, spreads across the level surface in a series of wild, untamable swamps. It is wonderfully enticing feeding ground for ducks, with its submerged wilderness of timber, with its great swards of smartweed, with its stately beds of yonkapin, watery meadows of trenchant saw grass and defying breaks of the omnipresent elbow grass. Its overflow is traceable to the earthquake of 1812.

A small river darting from its source in the hills, on reaching the alluvial lands attempts the colossal task of draining an immense territory, and, finding itself incapable long before half of its course has been attained, floods the surroundings with a series of lakes, ponds and sloughs, even far back into the segregations of timber, where the sun never meets the earth except in Winter.

It is only a few miles from the Mississippi, so naturally it is the feeding ground of the big flights during the Fall and Spring pilgrimages. But should there chance to be open water throughout the Winter, as frequently happens, the ducks remain. No doubt they consider that it would be a squandering of Nature's bounteousness, with an assortment of food and balmy weather conditions, to travel further south.

I have spent many days, weeks and months in the Sunken Lands districts of Missouri and Arkansas (Reelfoot Lake is just adjoining in Tennessee) among the native hunters and have

had many unique experiences among them. Of course, with the lid now on so tight on market hunting, there have been many changes in the past few years. Many of them now act as guides for hunters from the big cities or for tourists. Every resident capable of firing a gun was a market hunter, and is yet, if the laws only permitted him.

Settled By French.

The older class of natives indicate conclusive proof of the former stand of the French. Not only their countenances confirm it, but their names certify to their origin. Godair, De Lisle, La Forge, Du Priest, and other names smacking of the Gauls, evince the blood of the pioneers that settled in the swamps near New Madrid over a century ago.

Some of the residents at present are outcasts from the warring factions of Reelfoot Lake, which is only a short distance across the Father of Waters. There is a constant pilgrimage between these two Sunken Land abiding places, yet there are many who never vouchsafe the reason of their presence, or their former occupation, for they are never questioned about it; if they are willing to abide by the unwritten laws of the swamps, they are made welcome.

The native hunter of the Sunken Lands is gifted with a tremendous acuteness in understanding the habits of wildfowl. He is singularly correct about what days ducks will come into the decoys; the "lead" which they will follow; his prophecies are almost incredible in their correctness. He only glances at the water lapping the flags to form his decision. Then while in the blind he is motionless—a thing of stone—until the moment for execution arrives, and he kills his ducks to fall only in open water. He is a splendid caller, something you seldom see among sportsmen, for they are as likely to call a flock of pintails with

The Chesapeake Bay Dog Ferg's Bingo. Owner, Dr. W. D. Jones, Devils Lake, N. D.

The Prize-Winning Chesapeake, Edmund's Lusitania.

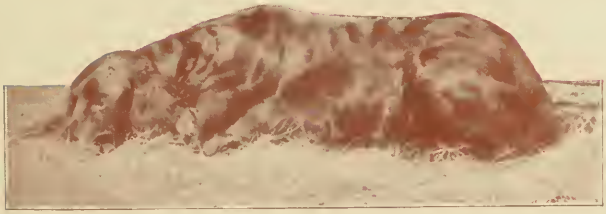
Ernest McGaffey and Teal Ducks.

Duke of Chesapeake. Owned by F. E. Richmond,
Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Some of Pudgy's Victims on the Texas Gulf Coast.

Beverly's Violet Pudgy at Aransas Pass, Texas.
Owner, George C. Eicholtz. Breeder, A. L.
Beverly, Sanborn, Iowa.

William C. Hazelton.



My Star Duck and All-Around Dog, "Jack."

the same note used for mallards. They are in this guided solely by the flight of the ducks.

The insight of a native, under certain conditions, is nothing less than marvelous. There are times when ducks are everywhere in sight in flight, yet nothing can tempt him into the blind, for he believes he is infallible about when the ducks will decoy. Strangely, while guided by the signs which are indeed confusing to the average mortal, he seldom incorrectly reads them.

No persuasion can lead the native to violate the unwritten agreement of allowing the flight a rest on Sunday. He is to be praised also—and the same cannot be said for the average city sportsman—for his absolute refusal to molest the ducks near a roost.

Roost shooting, which is the most vicious system of wanton slaughter, is indulged in too frequently by the hanger-on of the swamps, not the genuine native, and unfortunately, he has been encouraged in this by the example of the city sportsman.

The writer appreciated a neat way the "Little River bunch" prevented an invasion of roost shooters.

At the roosts in the neighborhood of Five Hundred Acre Bend, a party of city men, guided by a Reelfoot outcast, dropped in for the sole purpose of bombarding roosts. The native hunters got wind of it. At sunset, in the flag stands close by, they lighted balls of tow saturated with coal oil. The gunners stationed at the roost were unable to behold the small flame, but the ducks circling above refused to drop in as was their custom at night.

It is regrettable that, with the exception of a few in the vicinity of the shipping docks, scarcely any of them can read or write. But if you are not a game warden, they will exert themselves to their utmost to make your stay an agreeable one. All the information they obtain on the subject of game laws is related

to them at third hand, garbled and so distorted that their conception of the intent of the law is, at the least, very vague.

The old-timers, having erected shanties on piling and floating docks, far back in the overflow—live contentedly. When not in pursuit of the wild creatures, they care for their live decoys, and mend their nets, but no attempt is made to cultivate as much as a small garden—presuming they had the inclination—for they do not not reside near enough to *terra firma* to do it.

The morals of the younger generation hugging closely the railroads, are very much lower in their standards than those of the old swamper. The young men visit the towns occasionally, load up on bad whiskey, and become really dangerous citizens. From long preying on visiting sportsmen, they imagine themselves overly shrewd, and in consequence they are very conceited in their knowledge of swamp lore. After a debauch, they develop morbidly antagonistic tendencies toward all visitors. How daring some of them become can be drawn from the history of the Big Lake troubles.

It is a good thing, however, that they usually settle their difficulties among themselves, for none seem to care what happens to them in the overflow.

Unique Experience in the Swamps.

One December evening the writer arrived in the swamps on Little River. It was almost dark. And, as he flung aside his belongings in the guide's camp house, he was informed that there was an abundance of ducks. That night a north wind drove down mercilessly through the swamps. It howled most hideously through the unseasoned and unmatched planking of the small edifice of sweet gum.

My aspirations drooped considerably at the thought of everything becoming frozen during the night, and the flight far off

in the South. Just as I anticipated, the next morning an unending sheet of ice greeted my eyes. The weather was bitterly cold. I could hear the soft swish of wings, as I glanced overhead and beheld flock after flock hastening southward.

Entering the house my guide became aware of my disappointment. "Don't recken we'll git enny ducks today," he said, a quizzical smile spreading over his dark face.

"No, just my luck!" I replied, vainly trying to repress my chagrin.

While we ate heartily of our breakfast in silence, the strange play of the guide's features puzzled me. When he arose from the table he pulled off his shoes and donned his rubber boots and hunting coat.

"Come on!' he said.

Thinking some strange farce was about to be enacted by Jack, I dressed in the same manner and followed at his heels. The ice was strong enough to bear us, though we hugged the timber, fearing that too close an approach to the river might reveal a weak place only too late.

Jack now cut six long poles of pawpaw. Much as I wished to learn of his intent, I kept apace with him without speaking. He led me to a spread of open country, close to a clump of saw grass, where I remembered the water was very shallow.

Great Flocks of Wildfowl.

Every glance at the sky marked long lines of ducks, great banded flocks all looking for unfindable open water, or preparing a burst of speed for more balmy surroundings.

Jack fastened his pawpaw poles together with stout cords, until they attained a length of 60 feet. He split the end of one and affixed a small board, which he carried in the folds of his coat. The contrivance resembled a small snow scraper with an elongated handle.

"Now!" exclaimed Jack, "let's git 'nd break a beeg open place in the ice."

We went at it with a will, and soon, by prodigious tramping and jumping, had quite a large space broken before we waded back to the bleak shelter of tawny grass.

Jack shoved his long pole into the water, worked it constantly to and fro, until the water and broken ice was then churned into a miniature wave display.

"Take hold of the pole now, and keep her a-goin, 'nd I'll git to callin'," he said.

How the ducks came to that one hole of water in the vast swamps no one can realize without having been on the scene. They came in flocks, then in communities of thousands. We secured our limit in a few minutes, but the play of the native was too great a treat to leave immediately. I can never forget how the great clouds of seething wings and startled, raucous notes emanated from the vicinity of that little space of open water. It was almost beyond belief!

OLD BOB OF SPESUTIA ISLAND

GEORGE L. HOPPER

OF all the Chesapeake Bay retrievers, or any other kind of retrievers it has been my pleasure to shoot over, Old Bob of Spesutia Island stands out, in my personal recollections, the peer of them all. He was a most perfect specimen of the rough or curly-coated dog. His outer coat was curled and twisted as close and as tight as the wool on a Guinea nigger's head. It felt to the hand like the wool of a Merino sheep; in color like the sands on the shore. And he weighed about eighty pounds.

Old Bob was raised and owned by Colonel Ned Mitchell, one of God's noblemen, standing six feet seven inches in his stocking feet, a big man in every way the term may be applied; hospitable, kind and indulgent to a fault towards any boy coming to the island for a day's outing, fishing, crabbing and to shoot ducks and snipe. He could mix a mint julep which would make you virtuous and happy and teach you to speak the truth, especially when describing the largest fish which always gets away. Woodcock and quail, too, could be found in goodly numbers during their respective seasons.

"Can Bob go with us, Mr. Mitchell?" was always the first demand upon the Colonel's hospitality.

"Why, certainly, take Bob with you, boys! You can't get your ducks without Bob."

Old Bob would give you a very friendly recognition at the sight of the gun upon your shoulder. But you might coax until

you were blue in the face, not a step would he go beyond that gate, to which he had accompanied you as gallantly as the Colonel himself always did, upon your departure for home, after a pleasant and successful outing at the Middle Island Farm. Bob would sit by the gate, and if you attempted to tie a rope about his neck he would let you know by unmistakable signs that he would regard it as a personal insult and treat you accordingly. The only thing you could do was to inform the Colonel that Bob refused to go. What a pleased look would encompass that big, kindly and honest old face when you informed him that Bob refused to go with you. The Colonel would then come out on the porch and laughingly call out:

"Bob, come here a minute! Why don't you go along down to the shore with the boys and help them to get some ducks?"

The Colonel's request was sufficient. Out the gate Old Bob would bound, as much pleased as we were, and would stay with us from daybreak to dark. I have seen him on such occasions follow a crippled duck so far into that bay it became difficult to distinguish which was the dog's head and which the duck, as they arose and disappeared from the rolling waves. We would become alarmed, fearing he might become exhausted by following the duck such a great distance; then we would fire our gun, a signal he never failed to answer promptly by returning ashore.

Old Bob Brings Home Some Ducks.

The gunning days upon the flats or feeding grounds of the upper Chesapeake are Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays. Other days of the week, according to the local laws, they are allowed to feed unmolested. A good, stiff northerly breeze on gunning days would drift most all the dead and crippled ducks not picked up by the lookout boats which attend the sink boxes

upon the shore of Spesutia Island. No one knew this better than Old Bob. He would be up and doing by daylight the next morning, diligently hunting, and would find every dead and crippled duck, then tote them, two and three at a time, to the house, invariably placing them at the kitchen door. I distinctly recall the old cook rushing to the dining room door one Sunday morning, exclaiming in a very excited manner:

"Befo' God, Miss Susie, if Bob ain't done gone and bringed home another passel of dem ducks!"

We all rushed out to see, and sure enough, there were a dozen or more canvasbacks, redheads and blackheads.

A Contrast Between the Past and Present.

It is one of my most pleasing pastimes, when harking back over this trail of life, to draw a comical contrast between the up-to-date hunting outfit which we all possess nowadays and that in general use when we were boys; also the amount of game to the number of shots fired and the cost of ammunition expended, etc. We now have double-barreled automatic ejectors, to say nothing of the death-dealing pump and automatic shot-guns. In our boyhood days I sallied forth, in company with a little nigger and Old Bob, armed with a single-barreled shot-gun longer than myself, equipped with a hickory ramrod, a wad of newspaper for wading, a quarter of a pound of black powder, a pound of shot and a box of G. D. caps. When the waterproof cap come in vogue the uttermost limit of perfection, we thought, had been reached with the fowling-piece.

Tolling Ducks on Chesapeake Bay.

At tolling Old Bob was unexcelled. We would saunter along the shore of the island until we located a raft of ducks within a half mile of shore. Then if conditions were favorable we would hide behind an old log or a pile of driftwood, as nearly opposite the ducks as possible. Bob was then coaxed into the hiding place and a red bandana, borrowed from old Aunt Melissa for the occasion, was made fast about midship of Bob's tail. When the bandana was made fast and secure, out would bound Old Bob, delighted to begin tolling. He would begin about fifty yards above or below us, running belly deep in the surf, barking at the top of his voice, then turn at about fifty yards, keeping up the performance until the ducks' attention was attracted. As the ducks swam in towards the shore Bob worked back upon the shore until he was to our rear some ten or fifteen yards, always on the bounce and barking as loud as he could. I have seen the ducks come in to the very edge of the surf; then, with a steady rest and an aim that never failed, we would knock over five or six at a shot, sometimes more. At the crack of the gun Old Bob would rush into the water and grab the cripples. It mattered not how many you knocked over, the cripples received his first attention. We would gather up the ducks and then move on until we located another raft of ducks at a favorable distance from shore. Thus we would continue until we became so tired and hungry we would have tried to eat a duck fried in coal tar. With the gun stock strained to the breaking point by the weight of the ducks, we would homeward plod our weary way, hungry and tired, but oh! how proud and happy! Would that such happiness could always be continued until we pass over the Great Divide into the Happy Hunting Grounds!

CALIFORNIA GOOSE SHOOTING IN THE RICE FIELDS

JOSEPH S. RUGLAND

FOR a month we had been dreaming of geese and finally the day arrived when our dream was to come true. Our hunting party consisted of four congenial men, all of whom are splendid wing shots and sportsmen of sterling qualities.

After a very pleasant automobile ride through the fertile valley of the Sacramento, we arrived at our destination about nightfall, and were met at the hotel by our guides, whom I shall introduce as Ernest and William, both men being expert goose callers.

The evening is clear and a moderate north wind is blowing and as we walk about the main streets of the town, for it is early, we can hear geese flying overhead to and from their feeding grounds. Their calls to one another as they pass over our heads is music to our ears.

We are, of course, elated to hear that the geese are on hand in countless numbers and our imaginations are strained with the thoughts of our hunt of the morrow.

So we wend our way to the hotel and turn in early, but not before the proprietor had several reminders to call us at 4:30 A. M. without fail.

It seemed to me that I had hardly closed my eyes, when a vigorous pounding on the door was heard, followed by the command, "Get up, gentlemen, breakfast ready in fifteen minutes."

Our guides were waiting for us at the breakfast table and admonished us to get an early start to the hunting grounds, for

several miles must be first covered by automobile and then a long walk across the plowed rice fields to the spot where the geese had fed the day before.

Daylight found us well on our way across the rice fields and what a day it was! A brisk north wind was blowing and the sky perfectly clear. Off to the west, the snow-capped tops of the Sierras sparkled in the morning sunlight and distant flocks of geese appeared in their long V shapes on the horizon.

Nearer and nearer they came and we plunge on and on through the mushy rice checks and stubble, tingling with excitement and half frozen with the cold.

We Bag Our First Brant.

One of the guides observed a flock of brant flying toward us, very low and somewhat scattered, and we crouch close to the ground, motionless and with eyes fixed upon the geese. The guide calls Ah-unk! and the geese answer and soon they pass directly over us. They look high and we are asked, "Can you reach them?" whereupon we arose and fired into the flock and one large brant crumples, loses all hold and with neck dangling downward, crashes to the ground. He is tenderly picked up and consigned to the inner pockets of a hunting coat and again we hurry on, finally arriving at the shooting grounds.

Our guides, the afternoon before, had located this spot as being in the line of flight to the feeding grounds.

We immediately collect brush and make our blinds all in a row, taking great care to cover them densely with brush and to make them as natural as possible.

Use Newspaper Decoys.

Meanwhile our guides are setting newspaper decoys distant about seventy yards in front of the blind and directly in the line of flight. Common newspaper is used and spread alongside

clods of dirt in such a manner that the geese, when answering the calls of the guides, are immediately attracted by the paper decoys.

However, the guides depend entirely on their ability to call the geese within shooting distance.

After a few mments all is ready and we hide ourselves in the blinds for the geese are now passing over our heads in countless numbers.

Our guides call, first one and then the other utters the call Ah-unk! Ah-unk! and the geese answer in return. We marvel at the way the leader turns the flock in our direction. Then they close their wings and cautiously sail toward the decoys. But they are frightened and keep on and after a few moments we discover we are about 500 yards to the left out of the line of flight.

Our guides proceed to now set out some more newspaper decoys back of the blind about 200 yards and in line with the decoys in front and it seemed that the line of flight was almost immediately changed in our favor.

A call from Ernest turns a large flock of gray geese our way and on they come. How cautiously they fly, raising at the slightest alarm, until the leader discovers the decoys and brings the flock toward the blind. They pass directly over us and on the guides' signal, "At 'em!" we rise and pick our birds. At the first shot a gray goose closes his wings and plunges downward, landing near the blind. The geese start to climb but they are in easy range and five more fall dead on the ground.

We enjoy ourselves to the utmost and let me add that the sight of geese answering the calls of the guides, note for note, their antics in decoying when suspicions are aroused and finally when they are brought into shooting distance meant more to us than merely shooting them. We marvel at the seemingly absolute control the guides have on the birds and we really envy them.

A lull in the shooting occurred and William starts across the rice checks to scare up a flock of white geese which are feeding on fallen rice and the tender shoots of winter grain.

While stretching our legs which had become stiffened from kneeling on our hands and knees in the blinds keeping out of sight, a word from Ernest sends us to cover again and a flock of five speckle-breasted geese are pointed out to the left of the sun. As the geese were headed, they would pass 150 yards to the east of our blind, but Ernest commences to call Ah-unk! Ah-unk! and on they come, nearer and nearer, their necks outstretched and eyes and ears open. They appear to us, through their actions, as having been there before but cannot resist the calls of the hidden geese below them and they commence to waver over the decoys. The guides use the feed call and immediately they turn toward our blind. Thinking that they possibly might veer off we are told to shoot, but the birds are high and none come down. On they fly a hundred yards or so and we are disappointed but suddenly one falls, then a second goose succumbs, a little farther on the third sets his wings and sails to the ground and finally the fourth bird makes a mad drop to the ground. They were hit hard when passing over us but, as the guides explained, the birds were coming to us and hard to kill, hence the distance travelled before they fell. We carefully made note where they fell so as not to lose them.

Guides Now Call Swans.

A flock of nine white swan appeared in the south and our guides tell us they will call them over but not to shoot, as they are protected. Call for call, the swans answer and as these pure-white birds pass over us we can but look at them in all their beauty and admire their beautiful plumage. Truly they are a wonderful sight.

A lone honker is sighted and the guides commence to work on him but he is exceedingly wary. Three or four times he circled the blind, answering the calls with much anxiety. Finally on the last circle as he veered away toward the east, I could stand it no longer and two loads of shot from my gun served to wing-tip him. Spreading his wings, he sailed toward the ground, a half mile it seemed, and finally careened over and over in his mad fall. I made careful note of where he had fallen and with a supply of shells, started after him. Walking through a plowed rice field is hard work but the excitement of capturing my honker made this effort seem easy. When about eighty yards away, the goose saw me and started to run across the field, aiding himself in flight by his remaining good wing, so I quickly dropped to the ground without shooting until he finished his run. Not seeing me, the bird played possum, hiding behind a small patch of stubble, which enabled me to creep along unnoticed and later when he raised his head and drew his body to full length I was in range and a shot ended his goose days. A beauty he was, weighing eight pounds, and quite a load to carry back to the blind.

Sight Geese Far Away.

Away to the east, just below the sun, I could see thousands of geese headed our way, flying against the cold, strong north wind now blowing, most of them in large flocks, one above the other. Peering over the top of the blind I saw they were gray geese and brant, with a flock or two of snow geese mingled in.

"There they come!" I cried.

"Where?" asked the boys.

"Just under the sun, flying low," I replied.

"Right you are," shouted Ernest, the guide. "Boys, keep down this time," and we did.

In a few moments they were upon us, countless bands of geese, in front, in back, over us and some attempting to alight in the decoys. Our guides utter the feed call and soon a flock wheeled about, set their wings and sail for the decoys. They come on rapidly, calling Ah-unk! and twisting their necks, looking for unseen danger.

At the command, "Punch 'em!" from William, the guide, we fired into the flock, each man picking his bird and the crash of shot rattling against their feathers was plainly heard. Four geese crumpled and hit the ground near the decoys, one sailed into the slough and two wing-tipped geese dropped into the rice checks.

We went out and gathered up the dead birds and cripples and placed them alongside the blinds, breast down and carefully covered them with dry grass to prevent them from being seen.

Bag a Couple of Speckle-Breasts.

Two speckled-breasted geese came our way about forty yards high and apparently they had heard the recent cannonade for they made up their minds not to decoy. Calling them proved to no avail so we took a long shot and were lucky to have them both fall dead on the first two shots.

We are startled by the familiar Ah-unk! of geese somewhere in the vicinity, their call being heard plainly.

Quickly we drop to our knees and Ernest discovers seven geese dropping into the decoys unheralded. They had separated from a flock passing over and returned to decoy and, being in a line with the sun, we could not see them. Silence prevailed and goose talk filled the air. They craned their necks in our direction and carefully circled the blind. Once, twice, they made the circuit and then, scenting danger, climbed high out of gun range and made off in pursuit of other geese headed toward new

feeding grounds. Of course we are disappointed at not getting a shot at so fine a flock of geese, so turned our attention to fixing several torn places in our blind.

All morning long the geese came and some flocks left their toll of dead birds, other flocks proved too wily for our guides to call. So late in the afternoon we left our blinds and picked up the remaining dead geese scattered over our shooting grounds, divided the birds and placed them in our hunting straps. To save a lot of hard walking through the soft rice fields we followed the slough to the main highway where our automobile was parked. Here our guides bid us goodbye and we are profuse with thanks for their excellent work.

Soon afterward we are homeward bound with a limit of eight geese each and on rounding a turn in the road we could see the sun setting behind the lofty Sierras and our ears caught the faint cackle of brant and the familiar Ah-unk! of the gray goose on their way to goose heaven, the rice and newly planted grain fields.

REMINISCENCES OF "RAGGED ISLANDS"

HORATIO BIGELOW

WHEN the "Governor" offered me the choice of a share in one of the Southern ducking clubs I was in a quandary what to choose. A friend who had been a member of one Ragged Islands Gunning Club Association with property in the "Back Bay" at the head of Currituck Sound, suggested that I buy a share of "Ragged Islands" if there were one for sale. I found a dry-goods merchant in Norfolk who had the article in question and opened negotiations with him. He agreed to take me as his guest to the club for a week and if I were satisfied with the property I was to purchase his share.

To make a long story short, I went to "Ragged Islands." I saw the property and the fowl; I bought the share. These were my first ducking days and I shall remember them as long as I live. The old clubhouse was very inviting with its gun-room, its big open fireplace in living room and dining room, its double feather beds—two to a bedroom—and an arrow on the dining-room ceiling which showed the direction of the wind. The keeper took down a glass from a hook over the door and guided me up to the look-out to investigate. As it was Sunday, a "rest day," the fowl had not been disturbed and every cove and pond in the marshes had its quota of ducks, geese or swan. In "House Cove," a few minutes' walk back of the clubhouse, sat a flock of fifty or sixty swan, accompanied by numerous bunches of geese, while ducks of all kinds dabbled about the edges or traded back and forth. That night it was all I could do to sleep because of the racket of those geese and swans, augmented by those of their brethren who had flown in from the ocean to feed in the moonlight.

A Crack Duck Shot.

The club employed three men beside the keeper—two as guides and one as guide and game warden to keep off the poachers. They were all typical Southern baymen. The third man, "Old Beacham," didn't come around to the clubhouse often unless there were so many guests that he was required. He lived in a little shack on the bay side of the marshes and guarded the property. As a young man Beacham was considered the best marksman on the Back Bay and was said to have killed seventy-seven canvasbacks from a battery without a miss.

At "Ragged Islands" it was the custom to shoot the outside points in the mornings and the marsh in the later afternoon and evening. At the former you had chances at the diving ducks—canvasback, redhead, bluebill and an occasional goose or swan (swan were not protected at that time); in the marsh you had opportunities at teal, black duck, mallard, widgeon, shovellers, pintail, an occasional wood duck and more geese.

My first day at the club was a "blue-bird day" as Howard, my guide, called it, and we set out our twenty or thirty stool off South Point, as what little wind there was came from the south-west. After sitting in the stand for some time without a shot—there were plenty of ducks flying but high in the air—Howard, who must have had eyes in the back of his head, whispered: "Keep quiet! Here comes a little bunch of canvas from over in the ocean." I turned slightly and saw seven big ducks headed our way. I didn't think they would come down but Howard's call, "H-a-a-r, h-a-a-r, h-a-a-r!" attracted their attention and around they flew while I squatted down not daring to move a muscle. Finally with a whistle of wings they flew right over our heads into the decoys. "Now!" said Howard, and we stood up. We each got one as they jumped, but as the sun had risen and they flew right into its glare, a wing-tipped drake was the sole result of our second barrels. As our chances were poor

for any sport that day we went back to the clubhouse after a few hours.

Adventure With Swans.

The next day I was at Lane's with Howard. Contrary to custom we had decided to shoot this point in the afternoon and evening as a battery which had spoiled our shooting in the morning had just taken up. A few bluebills, two canvasback and a goose were lying in the grass back of the stand and it seemed as if this was to be the total of the day's bag as the birds had stopped flying.

A sailboat tacking up the bay rallied a large raft of fowl, ducks, geese and swans, many of which headed for the ocean. Their line of flight carried them in our direction, but the canvasbacks in the lead were out of range. A bunch of about forty swans followed the ducks toward the sea. They were flying low—not over twenty feet above the surface of the water—and well out from the shore. As they came by our point they cut in a little to pass over the bay next to us and this brought them about seventy yards from the stand. In the center of the flock some eight of the great white bodies in line caught my eye, and the heavy 8-gauge sent a couple of charges of BB's hurtling in their direction.

"Confound it, Howard," said I, "I didn't lead them far enough."

"Yes, you did, sir," was his answer, "look there, and there."

Fully a quarter of a mile away one bird like a white feather pillow was floating on the water, and nearly as far again another swan was down, but head up and paddling off like a steamboat. Howard lost no time but hustled after the cripple in the skiff. He was gone till dark and I heard him shoot several times, but when he came back he brought back with him both swans. One weighed sixteen and the other eighteen pounds.

When I first went to ""Ragged Islands" the rule about taking up at sundown was strictly adhered to, so that unless the weather was blustery the shooting was pretty tame after sunset. One memorable evening I had tied out in the west box at Murray Cove. A westerly wind had been coming up all the afternoon and the ducks began to fly before I was ready for them at 4 P. M. This only left me only a half hour to shoot as the sun set at 4:30. I had settled down in the stand when a single black duck hovered over the decoys. I pulled on him twice in quick order, but missed him clean. Then a pair of shovellers set their wings and started to alight among the decoys. I gave them two barrels but they hurried on their way. I was beginning to get exasperated and when a huge flock of mallards came straight across the cove to me and two "guns" brought no results, I decided it was time to steady down, take my time and do something. A wisp of bluewings whizzed over the decoys and this time I scored a double. An inquisitive pair of widgeon also came to stay, as did a fat mallard drake. I had found myself and until I took up at 4:30, I didn't miss another shot. Twenty-two was my bag in that short half-hour and a pretty variety it contained—mallard, black duck, blue-winged teal, widgeon and pintail. I never expect to have such a shoot again.

Shooting Geese by Moonlight.

There were many geese "using" in Shed Cove, at the northern extremity of the club property, and one moonlight night after supper, Cooper took me up there. Such shooting was legal at that time.

It was an ideal night for the sport in hand. The bright moon reflected in the waters of the cove cast dark shadows along its edges. The roar of the sea on the beach presaged an easterly wind for the morrow. There were just enough light clouds in the sky to make the birds show up well.

A splash, a low "Honk!" and a single goose dropped into the cove among our decoys. I stood up and killed her as she rose against the silvery sky. Twice more this happened and the second time two Canadas came to bag. Then I heard the hoarse clamor of a big bunch of geese as they came in from the sea to feed. The noise grew louder and louder as the birds came into view. As they approached the cove they came down out of the air, set their wings on the further edge and started to sail over the water for the decoys. I was planning how many I could get with my two guns, the "8" and the "12," when "Mike," the Chesapeake Bay dog, who could stand the strain no longer, leaped over the front of the stand toward the approaching fowl. The noise was deafening as the frightened birds turned and all I killed was one big gander which was in range when my canine companion put in an appearance. The old dog certainly deserved a whipping, but I could not do it after his faithful retrieving of the other birds. He had been at the club for many years and had never been guilty of such actions. Once he had swam three miles after his master.

When the flight stopped I had thirteen big fellows set up on sticks for decoys. I killed three out of one bunch of five.

I had heard several shots from Cooper and as he didn't seem to be coming I sat back in the stand and dozed off. I woke with a start; it was as dark as a pocket and the moon had disappeared. There were no heavy clouds in the sky and for a few minutes I tried to puzzle it out. Then it occurred to me that there was an eclipse of the moon due that night, hence the vanishing act. The "plash" of a paddle sounded and Cooper pushed ashore. He had six geese in the skiff, which, together with mine, made a pretty respectable bag. The moon came out again to view our luck before we reached the landing and it was a tired but happy pair that it lighted up the old plank walk to the clubhouse.

IN THE HAUNTS OF WILDFOWL IN TIDEWATER VIRGINIA

THOMAS DIXON, JR.

OLD Tidewater Virginia is the most fascinating spot on our planet, I claim. I can prove it by the shore birds, anyhow. When the migrating snipe have raised their young in the far South, they come north to spend the summer. Far up in the sky, flying V-shaped, as the wild goose, the curlew leads the way in April. With his keen eye surveying from the heavens the glories of the world, he sweeps over the wild beauty of the tropics, calling now and then his silver trumpet-note of command to his flock.

But when he looks down from the clouds and sees the thousand rivers, creeks, channels and solemn marshes of Old Tidewater Virginia, his voice rings with joy, his wings droop with ecstasy, and the whole flock break their long silence with such a shout as the Greeks of old raised when, homeward bound, they first beheld the sea.

Gracefully they circle downward, chattering, calling, screaming their delight. They know a good thing when they see it, and they see the earth from pole to pole.

A boat is the only instrument by which man can move over any considerable part of the earth's surface. The only way to really get out of doors is to push off fifteen miles from shore into salt water. The sea is man's most expressive symbol of the eternal, and the truest test of reality. I had built a schooner yacht of ocean-going tonnage, yet of such light draft she could thread her way amid the labyrinths of sand shoals, mud-flats,

marshes and creeks of the South Atlantic Coast. Five things I tried to express in this boat—solid comfort, safety, economy, utility and beauty. Such a craft is the most useful boat in Virginia waters a man can build. She will go into more places and do more things than other boat of her size afloat. We can anchor on the feeding grounds of wildfowl where the tide leaves her high and dry twice a day, and stay as long as we like. She was built on the Chesapeake Bay.

We had dropped our anchor in the deep water at the head of a channel in one of the innumerable shallow bays of Tidewater Virginia. She swung to her anchor at sundown on the ducking grounds, and when her jib ran down with a crash, a great flock of brant rose with a chorus of protest that rang over the waters like the baying of a thousand hounds. The flock was two miles long and three hundred feet deep and their flight darkened the sky like a storm cloud.

"Never mind, old boys, we'll give you something to talk about tomorrow if this wind holds to the nor'west," was George's, my skipper's, answer to their cry.

We were in the midst now of the haunts of every wildfowl that spreads its wings along the Atlantic seaboard.

The prayer of the huntsman in search of ducks, geese and brant is for cold, stormy weather.

It is impossible to get many wildfowl in mild weather. They will not decoy, but will drift around the bay in great masses, talking, laughing, screaming and joking at fool hunters they can see plainly squatting in blinds surrounded by wooden humbug birds. They never come closer than a mile in such weather, and what a man says on these days would not do to go in a Sunday School book.

But when a stiff breeze blows and the decoys begin to nod and bob in the water, with life in every movement, then we can

fool Mr. Duck and Mr. Brant, stock our pantry for rainy days and make glad the hearts of friends in town with the call of the expressman.

Mild Weather Not Conducive to Sport.

I never knew how much beautiful weather there was in winter until I began cruising for ducks and geese. I had an idea before that about half the days of our winter life are bleak and stormy. I have found by nine years' experience that on an average there are about four days in each winter month in which the weather is bad enough to make a good day for ducks. If we get more than four days of stormy weather in a month, fit for good shooting, it is a streak of extraordinary luck. And if one or two of those four grand storm days do not fall on Sundays, it is downright rabbit's foot luck.

At night in the snug crew's quarters forward, there is the hum of sportsman industry. The boys are loading shells with number 2 shot for brant.

The wind is howling a steady gale from the north and increasing the length of its gusts with steady persistence.

"Hear them shrouds talkin?" cried George with a broad grin. "If this wind hangs on here till mornin' we'll burn them brant. Confound 'em, they're the most tantalizin' bird that ever pitched in this bay. I never killed a one of 'em the whole of last winter. There were no younguns among 'em. It's funny. Some years there's thousands of younguns. But last year I didn't hear the squawk of a dozen, and you can't kill an old brant. This year the bay's full of 'em and we'll burn 'em up tomorrow—see if we don't."

"I hope so," I replied. "They made me mad enough last winter's cruise, laughing and joking about us the whole month."

"Yes, and they kept it up till they left in the spring. Nobody

killed any the whole season. But if we don't have brant for supper tomorrow night, I'll eat my old cap."

When George was willing to stake his old slouch cap with its long visor, that looked like a duck's bill, he was in dead earnest.

"If the wind will just hold on!" I exclaimed, with sad memories of high hopes many times shattered before.

"Don't worry. You'll git all you want tomorrow. It'll be a question whether we can git to the blind. Don't you hear them flaws gittin' longer and longer? That's been goin' on all day. It'll be as long goin' as it was coming and it ain't got nigh the top yit."

We Struggle With the Elements to Reach Blind.

Sure enough, the next morning, as we ate breakfast by lamplight at 5:30, the wind was howling and shrieking through the rigging like a thousand devils.

George looked grave. I asked what troubled his mind.

"I'm studyin' 'bout gittin' to that blind. We're goin' to the Boss blind and we'll have a tussle to make it with the wind on our quarter. We ought to 'a'gone to the wind'ard further before we anchored."

And we did have a tussle.

We took off half our decoys from the gunning dink and with two ten-foot oars began to shove our craft out over the foaming storm-tossed waters. It was all we could do to stand up against the wind; and with both oars fixed on the bottom, the strength of two men could barely move the fifteen-foot, light cedar boat. It took us an hour to push her three-quarters of a mile to the blind. It was freezing cold, but we were both wet with sweat when we got there.

The Boss blind is a famous one in this bay, that stands far out on the mud-flats near the edge of a ship channel. It was first stuck there by Uncle Nathan Cobb, the king of wildfowl

hunters in Tidewater Virginia, nicknamed the "Old Boss" by his admirers.

This particular bay has 4,000 acres of mud-flats on which the wild celery grass grows, furnishing rich food for the birds. There are many blinds of cedar bushes stuck over its wide sweep, but the Old Boss blind is yet the king of them all. It was placed there fifty years ago with consummate skill, in the track of the brant and ducks, and all the ingenuity of rival hunters has never been able to place a blind anywhere in that 4,000 acres to interfere with the flight of birds that pass it in stormy weather.

The tide was just right. It made high water at daylight. This gave us the whole of the ebb tide, the low water and the first movement of the flood tide for shooting. The tides are right for blind shooting on the two weeks of full and new moon, and wrong on the two quarters.

As the waters fall off the flats the birds come in to feed on the grass as soon as they can reach bottom with their bills, and, when hungry from a long run of high tides, they come out hours before they can reach bottom in search of shoal places.

We had just put out our decoys as the sun rose, and were pushing into the blind, when a broadbill swept in range before I had loaded a gun.

"They'll come today like chickens!" cried George.

"There's a black duck in the decoys!" I whispered, as he handed me my No. 10 gun. I bagged him, and then for an hour we were kept busy with the broadbill and black duck.

At last a flock of brant of about two hundred headed in straight for us. I seized my second gun, loaded with No. 2 shot, and made ready. They were flying low in the teeth of the gale. Now I could see their long, black necks and snowy feathers arouid their legs, and they looked as big as geese. As they drew nearer, with every throat in full cry, the noise sounded

like the roar of a fire sweeping a canebrake, exploding the joints of two hundred canes a second! I held my breath, and as they swept in range about thirty yards from the blind, I blazed away, bang! bang! I expected to see it rain brant. I hadn't touched a feather!

"Well, I'll be——!" exclaimed George.

I had the dry-grins, and looked down at my gun to see if it was really a gun, when I noticed my hands trembling like a leaf.

"Brant fever," was George's dry remark. "You must git over that, if we are to do our duty here today."

"I'll maul 'em next time," I promised.

In half an hour another bunch swung in and I brought down three with the first barrel and two with the second. Then for five hours we had the sport of which I had dreamed.

When the tide had ebbed off and left the flats dry, we counted our game, and we had 17 brant, 16 black ducks and 10 broadbill, a total of 43, and as fat and toothsome birds as ever tickled the palate of man.

When the tide began to flow back in flood on the flats the wind had died down to a gentle breeze. We took up our decoys, stowed our birds under decks, set our little sail, and as the sun sank in a sea of scarlet glory swept slowly and contentedly back to the *Dixie*.

It was a memorable day—one to tell young folks about in the far-away years when one becomes a grandpa and must ask his son for permission to venture out on a stormy day.

Then followed a week of tantalizingly beautiful weather in which the ducks and geese and brant had it all their own way. Some days we would get a half dozen—oftener two or three. But the glorious moonlit nights, with the chorus of birds chattering and feeding about us, had their compensations of soul peace and dreams.

How We Dine on Board.

And then the dinners on board! Of course, salt water gives a man an appetite that balks at few things containing nourishment for the human body, yet it is equally true that one can live as royally on a yacht in Tidewater Virginia as in the palace of a king. The way my wife cooks brant and ducks and fixes diamond-back terrapin on board a boat is a secret beyond the ken of any hotel kitchen. This is how she says it is done. The birds are dressed and placed to soak in salt water five hours. Then they are rubbed thoroughly with salt and pepper, and basted about two hours on a very hot stove until so tender you can stick a fork into the breast and turn it easily.

We are ready now for dinner at 6:30. The saloon is bright and cheerful. We start the music-box, and take our places at the table. There are four of us—my wife, our two boys, and myself, but we figure for the needs of eight normal appetites. The oyster plates give way to diamond-back terrapin stew. We catch our own terrapin. They cost us nothing except the fun of catching them. When I strike terrapin at a banquet in New York I generally have to ask what it is. After the terrapin, the cook sends in the ducks—four browned, juicy, smoking balls on a big game platter! It takes a whole duck for each ravenous appetite—meat so delicious, so tender and toothsome it fairly melts in your mouth! We serve with grape jelly, candied sweet potatoes, and steaming hot coffee.

I dream of these dinners the other eleven months of the year. How far away and unimportant the land world seems now! We are fifteen miles off shore—fifteen miles from a postoffice, telegraph line, or a railroad. We never see a newspaper, know nothing about what is going on the big, steaming cities, and have ceased to care to know. Only the winds and tides are important. How vain and stupid and unreal seem the vulgar ambitions of

men and women who herd in those big iron and stone-bound hives and strive with one another.

It was here that the sense of the pity, the pathos, and the folly of this struggle first stole into my heart, and I ceased to care to be great. Here in this mysterious realm of sun and moon and star, wind and tide, bay and sea, sand beach and solemn sweeping marsh, how small and poor that other world, and how little it seemed to need me!

Swiftly the days fly. Ten days go flashing by as a dream, and we rub our eyes in vain effort to account for them.

We waked one morning and found that old Neptune had hauled his wind to the southeast in the night and drawn about us the gray mantle of mystery, a fog. All day long it hung on, dense and clinging, putting out the light of sun, moon, star and friendly lighthouse. The birds never moved a wing nor uttered a cry. They huddled in groups wherever the fog caught them. Far out over the sand beach we could hear the deep bay of the ocean hounds crying their distress. It was no use to grumble. We had learned to take things as they came. A fog meant a stay indoors, talk and dream and read. From our little library we drew forth our treasures and forgot the fog.

Next morning it was just the same.

"Look out for weather when this clears up," was George's greeting as I walked into the crew's quarters after breakfast.

"What sort of weather?"

"Cold, freezin', goose weather. I see them geese feedin' out there in the sink every day the last week. If this wind hauls into the nor'west tonight, the fog will lift, and we'll talk goose talk in that sink blind in a way that'll make your heart flutter tomorow."

Fortunate Day With the Brant and Ducks.

Next morning it was freezing and the wind was howling a thirty-mile gale from the north. We went to the goose blind

located in the sink, a deep place in the mud-flats that rarely goes dry.

A Day With the Geese in Old Virginia.

"The wind's just right," said George. "Every goose oughter pass this blind today. The wind's blowin' straight across their track, the flocks can't hear our guns, and we can hammer 'em the whole tide."

The goose is the wildest and smartest of all the fowl of our coast and the most difficult to kill. I had shot only four in several years' outing in Virginia, and was crazy for a storm day in their track.

At last it had come. The wind was blowing now a furious gale—so strong were its gusts it was almost impossible to shove out of our blind against it.

The first flock of geese show by their flight the track they will follow for the day. The sound of one gun heard by them will change their plans instantly and cause them to take a new course ten or twelve miles in the opposite direction.

But we had them today. The wind was at right angles to their course, and they could hear nothing. The first flock came as straight for our blind as an arrow.

What a sight, as they came honk! honk! in long, streaming lines, their necks stretched and their big, four-foot wings battling with the storm!

Crack! crack! went four barrels in perfect time, sounding like pop-guns in the howl of the wind, and three big fellows tumbled. When they came swirling down it looked as though we had knocked out a piece of the sky.

We pushed rapidly after them, and yet so terrific was the wind they were swept a hundred yards to leeward before we could reach them. Then we had a battle royal to get back to the blind. We had barely started shoving with our oars with all

the power of every muscle, when a flock of fifty geese circled over our decoys. And two big flocks followed close on their heels. Hundreds had passed before we got back.

A Chance for a Great Killing on Black Ducks.

Suddenly the sky was darkened with such a flock of black ducks as I had never seen at close range. There must have been a thousand of them. They sailed straight in and pitched in our decoys and rolled up in a great black sheet within easy gunshot.

Trembling with excitement, I raised to make the one mighty pot-shot of my life and kill a hundred, when George seized my arm.

"Don't shoot! There's a hundred geese comin' right in. Don't fool with black ducks—this is goose day!"

I let them alone and killed two geese out of the bunch that came, but I've regretted that lost shot into those black ducks a thousand times since, when they have been tantalizing me, on fair days with their insolent display of knowledge.

When the tide ebbed off in three hours we had seventeen big geese that weighed 214 pounds. We hung them up on the big foreboom of the *Dixie,* George and I crouched among them, and one of the boys snapped the camera at us.

It was a day never to be forgotten, and it will be many moons before we see its like again. It was the harbinger of the greatest freeze Tidewater Virginia ever saw in its three hundred years of English history, and the geese knew it was coming.

The whole sweep of Tidewater Virginia was a white desolation of ice; the Chesapeake Bay was frozen eighteen miles from shore to shore; and the ice was packed out sixteen miles into the Atlantic Ocean. Some winters ice does not form at all in these waters. As a rule, it freezes for two or three days in February and then thaws quickly. Sometimes, once in ten years perhaps, the bays will be frozen for a week at a time.

During the severe storm above mentioned we had a rough experience, but it was worth it. We had met the ice king in his white robes of omnipotent power. Of all the sounds I have ever heard a moving ice field, crunching against the sides of a vessel, is the strangest and most thrilling. The lighthouses, that had been blinking their kindly eyes at us through so many long nights, semed to have assumed now a strange, glittering glare, and one night, when the storm was at its darkest and wildest pranks, the nearby light was suddenly obscured. Great flocks of geese, brant and ducks, lost and crazed by the storm, were dashing themselves in despair to death against the gleaming lens.

I never cruise in these waters and go home willingly. When the time comes to leave, I feel like a schoolboy driven back to his tasks. Swiftly a month rolls by. There are engagements to be met back in that dimly remembered little world where they have mails, telegraph lines, railroads and newspapers. How I hate it all now! I resolve, when I go back, to make a million dollars, sail away and never return except for coal and water.

The order is given to get under way. The boys beg for one more day, but at last give up, swallow lumps in their throats, and fight to keep back the tears. I know my boys do this, because their father and mother do the same thing when they are not looking.

We are homeward bound now, with her big yacht ensign set aft and her colors at her masthead. Every heart is heavy and no one speaks. We feel as though we are sailing away into a strange world.

GOOSE-SHOOTING REMEMBRANCES

PERRY C. DARBY

SPRINGTIME is here again. The sun is climbing higher in the heavens each day now. The south wind is soft and balmy. The deep snow is commencing to settle and disappear. Here are little rivulets running down the hillsides and swelling all the little streams and the river is rising. All low places are full of water, the blue grass is trying to put on a green shade and it seems as though all Nature is getting ready to welcome the geese and ducks on their journey from the southland to their homes in the north. It is beckoning for them to stop to feed and rest before completing their journey to their breeding grounds.

Only those who have lived in the country know how we watch for the first signs of the coming of the ducks and geese. How we listen for the first sonorous ah honk! ah honk! of that grandest of all game birds, the Canada goose, and know that they have arrived. How that sound thrills you and your blood courses through your veins a little faster if you have one ounce of sporting blood in you!

It seems today as though the birds are calling me as they always have ever since I can remember at this time of the year. Sitting here with my Chesapeake dog "Sandy," it seems I am a boy again out on the marsh one of those fine mornings waiting for the mallards to come in. I can shut my eyes and see them settling over the decoys, their orange feet hanging down. I can hear the whistle of their wings as they make their last circle to

Waterfowl on the Gulf Coast. Photo by Courtesy of E. A. McIlhenny.

Harry Reiman and Beaver II at Havre de Grace, Md.

Ducks Feeding at Avery Island, La. Photo by Courtesy of E. A. McIlhenny.

Chestermere Babe Retrieving. Owned by F. E. Richmond, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

come in. "Sandy" seems to hear them, too, for he is looking up into my eyes and pleading to go. He realizes something is wrong but he don't understand the reason. The law says we cannot go forth to kill any more in the springtime and it is just and right to give the birds a chance. Still I have that old feeling coming over me. I go and look my guns and shooting togs over, thinking of the many happy days we have spent together with some good companions on hill and stream waiting for the geese to come in. Of the many misses and good shots we have made. How we killed the big gander and how Jim killed the three speckled-bellies at one shot, how Rollie and I fooled the Hutchins and Bill Bailey and I stalked the Canadas. These memories will endure long after we are too old to handle a gun, but we all hope to be able to meet them in the Fall when they return.

Seeing My First Goose Killed.

I can well remember the first Canada goose I saw killed. It is now about thirty years ago. It was on Christmas day. I was only a schoolboy then and how time flies!

I was raised in the country and attended country school. I came home one evening just a few days before Christmas. My father and mother had just arrived from a small town where we did our trading. We kids of course were looking to see if they had brought home any presents.

Everything had been put away but one package, which lay on the table. Being inquisitive I had to investigate. It was a sack of BB shot. Father coming in, I asked him what those shot were for and he told me that a big flock of wild geese were feeding on a blue-grass pasture where we kept some cattle on another place.

Christmas morning I was sitting on the floor looking over my presents, when father came in and seemed to be in a hurry. I asked him what he wanted. He exclaimed:

Trying for a Goose.

"Those geese are over there again and I am going to try for one. Do you want to go along?"

Well, you can just guess I did. I forgot all about my Christmas presents. I was all attention at once.

Father proceeded to get down the old double-barrel muzzle-loading shot gun, put in two big charges of powder and then a handful of BB in each barrel. Then taking the old muzzle-loading rifle, which weighed 13 pounds, and loading it, he said: "You can go along and carry this. If we can't get close enough for the shot gun, I will try one with the rifle."

We went over on the hill and down in the valley. A little more than a quarter of a mile away were the geese, about fifty in number. How big they looked to me, boy that I was. Father thought that by going around on the west side of the hill we could get up within about 100 yards of them, as some cattle were feeding there and they would not notice us. We went away around and made the attempt. Just as we got almost to the cattle something frightened the geese and up they went, much to our disgust. We dropped down and the geese divided, some going straight north and about twenty went south for a few hundred yards, then swung to the west and headed straight for us. They could not see us as we were partially concealed by the cattle. They came on about 20 yards high. When they were nearly to us my father jumped to his feet and with the discharge of the first barrel one sailed for the ground, but with the other barrel he only raised a small cloud of feathers and the goose kept straight on.

I did nothing but hug the big rifle. I did not shoot at all. I just stood there and looked and wondered if the day would ever come when I could kill those big fellows. I don't think I have ever looked on such big geese as these seemed to me. I had never been so close to them before. It was my first experience under fire, but I loved the geese then, as I do now.

Killing a Goose on the Wing With a Rifle.

It was in January, years ago, and my boyhood companion, James Tarpenning, and myself were going to a little town one morning to do some trading. I had along a Colt's 32-20 repeating rifle and my companion had a 10-gauge shot gun, one barrel shot and the other rifled.

While we were passing along the country road we heard the honk! ah honk! of some geese flying around in a large cornfield. We stopped and watched them until they settled down on a little piece of fall plowing just over the hill. We concluded we could get close enough for a shot.

Making our way up the hill we got within about 75 yards before they took wing. I opened on them with the rifle. I had only shot once when a shell jammed in the action and by the time I could get it out the geese were 200 yards away. I pumped it into them as fast as I could and about the tenth shot one let go his hold on the air and fell to the ground. You should have seen us two boys racing to see which one would reach the goose first. I cannot tell which one of us arrived first, but I do remember how that big goose lay on his back, his white breast sticking up and two prouder boys you never saw. He weighed 14 pounds. He had been struck between the wings, the bullet coming out his neck, killing him instantly.

Money would not have bought that goose! We had no game for sale!

As I sit here writing I cannot help but let my mind wander back to the times when James Tarpenning and I, boys together, spent many pleasant days on marsh and stream. Cares of life did not weigh very heavily on us then. We certainly put in plenty of time with the ducks and geese.

We were out one morning in the springtime. There had been great numbers of birds coming north, but this morning it was snowing. We decided to go to West Tarkio creek and shoot

ducks as they flushed out of the stream. We arrived at the creek, but found we were too late as some one had been there before us and scared the birds out. Following up the creek a little ways we soon became tired and as there were no birds to be found we concluded to return. On our way back we saw something move on a hillside more than a quarter of a mile away from us. It was now snowing fiercely.

Bagging a Small Flock of Geese.

James said to me: "What was that moving?"

We stopped and carefully reconnoitered. I saw some bird move it's head. I said: "They are geese."

We backed up and worked our way around the hill, coming over on them from the other side of the hill. They now saw us and rose in the air. We were within about 35 yards of them when they flushed, four in number. We killed them all and wondered how many more we could have killed if they had only been there.

That was years ago. Public sentiment has changed now and the ducks and geese have a chance in the Spring as they should. I hope Spring shooting is gone forever, but we boys have those pleasant memories of days spent together which no law can rob us of.

A Pair of Canadas.

One day in the Spring there was a driving, misting rain and it was anything but pleasant to be out of doors. However, I concluded I would go out after ducks and taking my automatic shot gun I hied for West Tarkio creek, bent on killing something.

Coming to a pond I discovered a large flock of ducks swimming back and forth. Keeping out of sight I commenced to crawl through the grass and weeds to get within range of them. As I was working my way along I noticed a pair of geese sitting

on the opposite edge of the pond and they were watching me all the time. I expected them to fly before I could get close enough to the ducks, but they just watched me and did not move. I worked my way until I was within shooting distance of the ducks and the geese still sat and watched me. They were too far away for me to have hopes of killing one, so I decided to do what I could with the ducks. I got busy and soon had eleven down, three of them being crippled. I slipped two shells into the gun. I then gave my attention to the geese again. They had flown about 300 yards. Now they were turning and coming back directly towards me. I stood still and when they had approached me within about 60 yards and I saw they would not be any nearer to me I fired at the lowest one and she immediately began to sail down. I had broken her wing. She went down into a clover field about 150 yards from me and commenced to call to her mate. I ran over and got as close to her as I could. The male bird flew around several times and finally came straight over me about 40 yards high. Curtains for Mr. Goose!

I now caught the wing-broken female and then gathered up my ducks. I walked home three miles carrying eleven ducks, one dead goose and one live one, besides my gun. I certainly was tired when I arrived and I am no weakling, either.

I kept the crippled goose shut up a few days. Her wing healed and I then turned her out with my flock and she remained with us all Summer, but when the Fall came her wing had grown out and one day she disappeared, never returning.

I have learned one thing. Should you wish to retain your captured geese permanently, it is necessary to amputate the first joint from their wing. When the Fall and Spring arrives they want to go.

An Enormous Honker.

Being invited to go duck shooting by my old friend, Bryce Hayes, I gladly accepted. The party was made up of Bryce Hayes, John Jeffries, my brother Ben and myself.

We went to Wilton, Missouri, for our hunt. We drove down there in a car and it was one of those fine days in November when Nature was at her best. A fellow really feels like living when he breathes the pure air.

We arrived at the hunting grounds and divided into two parties, John and I in one and Bryce and Ben in the other one. Selecting a promising spot John and I put out our decoys and made a blind of some willows.

When we arrived the birds had flown up in clouds, but we did not shoot at them. We hardly had the decoys set out until the ducks commenced to return. There were mallards, spoonbills, teal and sprigtails. We had some fine shooting for an hour or so then came a lull in the flight.

I was looking off towards the hills to the southeast when I saw a bird approaching and I said: "Get down, John, here comes a goose!"

He looked at the bird, laughed and said: "Oh! that is a hawk!"

I said: "You get down and don't move. That is a goose!"

The goose came on slowly and was heading directly for us. I gave a little call. He discovered our decoys and commenced to set his wings and lower his flight. He came right up within about twenty-five yards of us, when we both fired at him. He fell like a stone. John nearly ruined our blind getting out to him.

When we dressed him we counted fifty-six shot in his body alone. His wings measured a spread of six feet and four inches, the largest goose I have ever seen and I have seen a good many. We were very proud of that goose, John Jeffries and myself.

AFTER BLUEWINGS, UPPER CURRENT RIVER

JOHN B. THOMPSON

FIGHTING up a swift river after ducks requires a boatman of more than ordinary ability. Where every foot of the river is running swiftly, and only the long-handled iron-shod paddle and pole are of service, the one who has had no experience poling rakish johnboats up a watercourse that fairly revels in speed, cannot intelligently conceive the exertion of the journey. Ordinarily such a thing would not be thought of, but the craving to hold a twenty on fast-flying bluewings after an entire season's abstinence is irresistible.

Right off the bat my choice fell on sturdy, broad-shouldered Bill Green. During the last deer-hunting season we had pushed eight hundred pounds of camp baggage up the river for thirty-five miles. I knew his capabilities, and they were what were needed in the upstream jump shooting. For it demands a man who can steady the craft in the swiftest water instantly, push up on a gravel bottom almost noiselessly; and then, if necessary, go back a hundred yards or so and repeat the climb up a rapid without blinking, should one or two teals fall back of us.

This is a lot of hard work for a few teal ducks, when we can sit in a blind and kill all we want in half an hour. But the inexplicable outdoor lust bids us, and we follow, showing that the worst waters are conquerable, and that we can creep on ducks and jump them from open gravel bars.

Late one afternoon in September we fought up the long sweeping shoal below Righter's bluff, which with its great rugged heights of pine makes a half moon on the east bank of the river for nearly a mile. We had selected the bottom below the bluff for a camp site on account of its proximity to a spring and the splendid chances there for killing some small-mouth bass with the fly rod before supper. An erstwhile camping party had left a large wide table with benches on a small promontory in the bottom, which was some ten feet above the water in a grove of lofty hardwoods. Espying it we pushed up to it and landed.

So far no ducks had been seen—barring a pair of wood ducks that we picked up for supper. At the last moment we were too tired to think of fishing, promising ourselves some sport in the morning with the fighting redeyes, were the bluewings not in. Such a bright night as it was induced us to overlook the changeableness of the season, whereupon we cast the tent on the ground and made a bed of it, with the cover of the star-studded sky, white walnut and sycamore trees for shelter.

We Strike Stormy Weather.

Being an easy person to wake, I heard the first breath of damp wind hurling down on us from the Northwest. A storm was brewing. I called Billy, and at that very moment the rain struck us. Fortunately, already we had most of the provisions on the table, through fear of prowling creatures. There was no time to erect the tent, and we cut a long pole, shoved it into the fork of an ironwood, and flung the tent over it. In that way table and all was sheltered, but it necessitated our sleeping under the table on account of the confined area it covered.

Morning came with weather of the abominable sort, for the wind shrieked malevolently, and the rain continued torrentially. We made a fire during lulls in the storm against a clump of pine logs, that had been borne there on the breast of floods. All that

heavy rain had no power to extinguish that resinous mass after it was once lighted; and through this good fortune we managed to get meals. Except for these moments all that day and all that night the wind imprisoned us under that table. It was varied by a walk to the fire and back. Before the next morning in our imaginations every small pebble had grown to the proportions of gigantic boulders. But when day came with its chilling, penetrating blanket of gray mist and there was no rain falling, we felt thankful. Now we decided that no matter what the weather, we would fight it up to the first cave or chance the wet gravel bars, for our confinement had been nearly intolerable, and a step or two away from the heat zone of the fire meant a drenching in the wet switch cane.

Finally we got the wet outfit in the boat and sullenly fought our way against the curent. From a near bar in advance of us we heard whistling wings and feeble notes, but could distinguish nothing, so heavy was the fog. We literally picked our way through knowledge of the watercourse in the uncanny gray darkness. Presently a brisk wind tripped out of the North and the fog lifted, exposing the welcome light of a brilliant sun. The water and land were good to see after its washing. It directed our eyes to the bar in midriver. At first sight it was bare as ordinarily, but on advance it took on animation. It was alive with bluewings.

Though our approach was stealthy, they took fright and flew upstream. Then back they came right at us, every one on racing gait, vainly trying to pass his nearest companion.

We picked two drakes from the bunch, without knowing it in advance, one stone dead on the bar, the other, a miserable shot, which Bill had to run down in the weeds.

A few yards on we drew a single hen mallard, rather a premature advance agent of the Fall flight.

The terrors of Harry's Rapid were formidable enough to induce us into the route of Jones' slough cut-off, a shallow byway, tame of water where we entered but excessively rapid at the heading in place. The mile and a half we maneouvered with our heavy load, winding in and out, finally arriving at the narrow suck that came from the main river. I was poling in front, and in the swiftest part the treacherous pine broke in half, and overbalanced I tumbled head foremost in the cold water. The water was not deep, but I rolled a few yards, much to Bill's delight, before righting myself.

Wet as I was I was confident that another half hour of poling up through Compton and Buffalo shoals would dry out my wet garments.

A small flock of teal tried to pass us while entering the river. A trio fell in easy water, saving us the labor of dropping back and pushing forward again.

There were seen up toward the beautiful humpbacked bluff a number of men working on a tie raft. But between our present position and theirs we flushed at least five hundred bluewings that had been feeding in the weeds, fringing the long bar. We regarded it as uncommon that such a great number of ducks—new arrivals—would exhibit no fear of men, when the noise of chopping and hammering carried to us long before we perceived the cause.

The rafters were much pleased when we gave them six ducks.

At noon we came into the bay of Buffalo. There is a round pond of backwater made by the creek. From the route ducks pursued, I was positive we would jump at least one big bunch here. It is ordinarily in the line of flight and has feed—possibly the only locality in the mountains of the eastern Ozarks in the line of flight where ducks stay to feed. I have had trouble to keep ducks off of my decoys in this hole. But today only one little hen buzzed out.

I Miss a Bluewing.

"She's sure mine!" I apprised Billy. I had been shooting in form, and had had some praise from the boatman, but I now proceeded to ingloriously miss her with both barrels. She flew upstream, and then quickly returned and dropped in the tranquil pool. I had Billy back the boat and flush her. To my astonishment I performed as before. Not even a mite of a feather fell for my exultation. She surely bore a charmed life. I hastily shoved in two loads and tried out of range, just to hear the noise, not for hope of killing. She went on without harm coming to her.

I wondered why I could not hold on that straight-away bluewing. Could it have been the change of vibration from constant fast water to that of placid that threw me off! I don't know, and have never found out; and I have done this same act on many easy ones under the same circumstances!

Before very long a few more flight ducks fell to us. Then we shoved into Club House bar for lunch. The rest was a treat after poling up the golden stairs of Hell's Half Acre, a well-named tortuous piece of water that is by no means limited to a half acre, because it is a full mile from the foot of the fall, to where the swiftest water without a ripple glides away from you. Two flocks of bluewings passed here, but I never made effort to drop my pole and seize the gun. I remembered the killing of a duck signified a repetition of the uphill performance.

No ducks were passing during lunch. The sun poured down on us an August warmth, and we drowsed for an hour.

Ducks Are Plentiful.

It was a revelation as we proceeded up the river to find so many ducks. It so happens here, that today the stream may have every bar covered with ducks, but on the morrow not a one can be flushed. They arrive with the first inclement weather, and

leave with the element. All bluewings hug the bars. In only one instance were they in the backwater. It is strange here that they never resort to the feed pockets near the woods. They leave that for the native wood ducks.

At times the shooting was miserably tame, then again the position we were in was fraught with danger, and exacted as much skill with push pole and paddle as with gun. To obviate the necessity of retrieving dead as they floated downstream, we tried to fall them to our advantage. This, however, was not always as easy as the telling of it. And poor Billy more than once turned our boat around and pursued the dead, knowing he had harder work back to regain what he had lost in distance.

Nothing seemed to teach these bluewings that there was risk attendant on passage over a man's head within gun range, but it was evident that they had not been annoyed here.

At Pitman we found occasion to give most of our ducks away to one of the Government's snag-boat crews, whose captain told us no ducks had been on the river until the rain.

We forced our way up the entrance to Tucker Bay, and for five minutes it appeared as though the river were going to be too much for us. Bill, however, was loafing, and finally put on more steam. Our objective was the long, open spring bay above where this angry fork of the river ripped its way through gravel banks, and at last found repose after beating against the rocky cliff. Tucker Bay is clear, cold, sky-blue water, fed by springs. At the greatest depth the bottom can be seen and the plants growing there in a blanched state. About a hundred yards above the entrance a plank fence crosses the spring branch, and beyond is flatter landscape that shows meadows of watercress and smartweed. It is in a wild state and off the ordinary travel of small boats. And, no doubt, it was due to this, that we saw the great mingling of wood ducks, crested mergansers, snowy herons and shovellers. We regarded the sight with much pleasure, and de-

cided that as long as there was grub in the camp no wood ducks would come to harm at our hands.

There were many more bays like this to be encountered before the day would pass, and in grand hill setting like this, but the wildfowl that made it their home were to be free from molestation as far as we were concerned.

Backing out through the tangle of cress and restless eel-like water grass we toiled up Silver Shoal. Such a sweep of water continuing for so long kept us busy; and no ducks that passed received a salute. At a point on the flat bar five snowy herons, lithe fellows, almost destitute of fear, stared at us, their beautiful crystal-white plumage strangely contrasting with the dirtiness of the bar. Flying to a dead willow on our approach, they watched us interestedly as we proceeded up the river.

I Make a Killing on Bluewings.

The travail was not consummated. Ahead of us loomed the widest part of the river, Dug Ford. In advance there was quite an expanse of bar. The upper end was dotted with bluewings. In the middle of the river was situated the bar between two excessively formidable races of water.

"Bill," I whispered, "do you seen them?"

"Hell, yes? There's a million of them, hain't they?"

"Which side?" I asked, waiting for the benefit of his river knowledge to choose the most strategic approach.

"On the left bank side," he responded.

"Its the swiftest," I protested.

"Cain't help that," he drawled. "They hain't a'gwine to hear us that-away 'cause the water raises Cain up at the haid, and there's a few willows that will kiver our doin's. Now I'm gwine to work hedin' the boat all the time to them willows. I want duck for supper and breakfas' and some to take to Uncle Patsey. So you drap your pole, and let me do hit all. Git you gun and be reddy!"

"But, Bill, with all the weight in this boat its too hard for a man to buck up this——"

"Shut up, and keep down! Whose doin' this?"

Having regard for Bill's ways, and confidence in his accomplishing whatever he undertook, I submitted to his hasty instructions, though I could not help experiencing a pang at his running this water alone. If he accomplished it there was a chance of getting two shots at the immense flock. The real sport anticipated was not so much the act of killing, but the fact of manœuvering within range, and the intrepidity and skill of the boatman in running up the rapid.

I laid down in the bow, my eyes on Bill. He now stood half crouched and shoved the long paddle to the bottom; and when the steel blade caught he forced all his weight against it. The long boat moved very slowly, almost imperceptibly. The water sped by, hissing against its sides. Bill persisted. Once or twice I sent a glance of commiseration, but Bill returned a grimace which could only signify: "I'm gettin' along alright. You keep down!"

A few more yards, then Bill ran the boat on the bar. For a second all was tranquil, and the ducks seemed absolutely unsuspicious of danger. I stamped on the gravel and whooped aloud.

It was an immense cloud of ducks that got up and darkened the sky line before me. I shot both barrels, reloaded and shot again, as they flew every which way. Ducks fell on the bar and in the fast water to my right.

Bill rushed out after those in the water; he got six; then espying two cripples he followed them up to his arm-pits all the way to the east bank. Here he had a merry chase, but finally caught them. He was wet to the skin, but cheery, and his cheeks proclaimed his happiness by their redness.

"I'll shore have enough for Uncle Patsey!" he said.

I continued shooting. There was some charm to that bar that drew the ducks to it. I had four more chances before we resumed our journey. It was evident that we had sufficient ducks for ourselves and Uncle Patsey. This insatiable relative of Bill was to meet us at our night's camp. Bill did not consider yet that the bag was large. He directed me with his finger to a pocket of dead water, divided from the river by a sparse growth of elbow brush and willows in which innumerable bluewings and shovellers were feeding.

My part should have been to say no. There was already plenty. But Bill persisted with the promise he had made his uncle to get him lots of ducks, and I was loath to quit. My finger craved the inevitable just one more.

We See Wild Turkeys.

Bill paddled the boat over to the left bank in the shadows of massive Begamah bluff, across whose summit of hardwoods the sun left a path of yellow light. Out of the bottom walked a dozen stalwart turkeys, big fellows of great girth, and heavier than usual at this time of the year. The last touch of the sun beat down on their backs until they shone like polished bronze. Bill nudged me with his paddle. The big birds got sight of the movement, and it was rare fun to survey them, waddling with great rapidity through the spring branch, finally vanishing in a density of switch cane.

The boat pursued the west bank for a ways, then on to center. At last Bill paddled across, permitting it to drop quietly back of the bar.

I knelt behind our brush screen. Bill was anxious for a big killing. I peered at the ducks, and the last shot of the sun magnified them into giants of their kind, giving them an undulatory motion, as though they were on high waves. I knew that the glare of the sun on the water had me dazzled. I could not dis-

tinctly see anything in the peculiar luminance. The ducks flew, hitting a mighty gait upstream. I fired at them as they seemed to vanish in the low sun. Then I searched for results. Neither a duck nor a feather did I find. Only my eyes still blinked from the glitter of the sun on the water.

"Come, let's hit it to camp," advised Bill, vainly trying to conceal his chagrin, "or else dark will ketch us this side of Gooseneck. Don't think you kin shoot, nohow!"

Silently until dusk I bore my weight against the pole, when the boat landed on a mound of gravel. Uncle Patsey was there to meet us, and became much elated at the bunch of bluewings that Bill gave him. Something, however, seemed to worry Bill, for he continued uncommunicative. After supper the warm radiance from the rich pine knots flung a yellow glare out among us, and softened Bill apparently.

"Hit's all over now, but why did you miss them ducks on purpose?" he queried.

He received no answer, for it was my time for silence.

REMINISCENCES OF AN OLD-TIMER

CHARLES F. COLE

SOME of my first shooting was done on the "Kankakee" as we used to call the marsh country down south of Chicago along the Kankakee River. In those days it was certainly some marsh country extending away up toward Chicago, Calumet Lake, Deep River (Tolleston, Indiana), then on south and west to the famous "Illinois Bottoms." Then there was Fox Lake and Grass Lake in McHenry County, north of Chicago. This was back in 1872, when I lived at Geneva, Illinois, about thirty-five miles west of Chicago. I don't suppose there were ever any better duck resorts out of doors than the Fox Lake region and the country south of Chicago, the "Kankakee" and "Illinois Bottoms," Senachwine Lake and Bureau County, Illinois.

While I never met the noted Kleinman boys, I used to hear so much about them, and used to hunt with the fellows who were well acquainted with them, that it seems that I almost knew them personally. They were certainly the crack duck hunters of their day around Chicago. The famous old "Kankakee" used to hear their guns in those days, and 100 ducks a day and upward for any one of them was a common thing.

In 1872 I was fifteen year old. We lived on the Fox River, which was in a direct line north and south with the flight. In passing to and from the resorts in McHenry County and the Kankakee and Illinois Rivers the ducks used to visit us in great numbers, following the Fox River valley to a great extent. I

have seen some of the best shooting in the Spring when the ice was breaking up, or had run out of the river. Of course, everybody shot in the Spring those days. No one ever had a thought that the myriads of wlidfowl that passed our way in the Spring and Fall would ever be fewer in numbers, for they were there in countless thousands.

Game of Many Kinds Abundant.

Not all the game in those days was wholly confined to ducks. We had plenty of quail and prairie chickens. Jacksnipe were very abundant in season. We used to have the gloden plover in immense flocks. They frequented the upland pastures and ploughed land. We would go out, several of us, and get in cover, perhaps behind an old fence, or ditch, with high grass around it, and then it was simply slaughter when the big flocks came over.

Along the river and around the shores of the small lakes and ponds were great numbers of sandpiper and killdeer, also sickle-billed curlew, though the latter occurred much more infrequently. I have not seen a golden plover in forty years. I suppose there are a few still in existence, but the great flocks of by-gone days are no more. The last sickle-billed curlew I saw was in 1919. I killed three from a flock two miles north of Kit Carson in Cheyenne County, Colorado. I had a sheep ranch out there at the time.

Days of the Passenger Pigeon.

In those never-to-be-forgotten days when we lived on the Fox River we had the passenger pigeon with us in the Spring and Fall. They were the genuine wild pigeons, the bird that is now absolutely extinct. In the Spring, generally during the first few warm days of April, they would make their appearance, coming

north in small detachments of a dozen, two dozen, fifty, one hundred, and sometimes in flocks of more than a hundred. But usually in small flocks only. It was plain to see they were on the way to ultimate destruction, for the immense flocks of former days were gone. I have seen as many as a dozen small flocks in sight at one time in the Spring steadily flying north. Sometimes the flocks would be close together, often they would be strung out, and never at any time were they wild. A heavy toll was levied on the flocks as they passed over. They were beautiful birds to handle and look at, and the pity is that they are now no more. In those days we boys, and a great many of the men, shot with muzzle-loaders, thereby affording the birds a chance to get by with comparatively slight decrease in their ranks, for it took some time to reload after each shot. In the meantime several flocks would escape without being molested. I shudder to think what would have happened to the poor birds had we all been equipped with breech-loaders and the murderous pump and automatic guns of today!

I am still shooting the Parker hammer double gun, 10 gauge, 11 pounds, whenever I go for ducks. This gun I have had since 1875, and it certainly has travelled some and done some execution. It was one of the highest grade guns Parker Bros. made at that time, and I will venture to say they do not make a better shooting gun today. During all this time it has never shot loose. It is as tight and solid as the day I bought it.

Delights in Boat Building.

In later years as I grew up and moved away from Geneva, going to Chicago, I still clung to the inborn love of the gun and rod; or, rather, it clung to me, and I availed myself of every opportunity to gratify that love of field sports. After a few years—I think in 1882—I moved to Oak Park. It was a little suburb of Chicago at that time, and there I had a chance to

indulge myself in another of my delights—that of working with carpenter tools. I used to enjoy myself then. I had already built two or three boats but here, when I had equipped a good shop, I determined to build an especially good boat and use it on my hunts. This boat I built in 1885 and took it to Minnesota with me that Fall. I certainly enjoyed building that boat and it was so good that a fellow up there talked me into selling it to him. I went that year to Murray County in the extreme southwestern part of the State, Bear Lakes country.

The next year I built another boat of red cedar, which was a better one than I had built the year before.

A Model Duck Boat.

The following year I had a beautiful duck boat built by R. J. Douglas & Co. of Waukegan. This boat was built of white cedar and copper nailed. Sharp at both ends, thirteen feet long, three feet beam, decked all over except a cock-pit five feet long and two feet five inches wide, oak combing around cock-pit four inches high to keep out the water. This boat sat very low in the water and when sprinkled with litter or a few rushes on each end you could shove into short grass or thin rushes, lie back, and the ducks would come right in to the decoys and never see you. This boat was as dry as a cork all the time. I used to have a little dry hay in it for warmth and comfort and certainly got a world of pleasure out of that boat. The bottom was sprung a little five feet from each end so that it would pass over lilies or aquatic plants on the water, noiselessly, and would run in a few inches of water, giving me a chance to get into places that almost any other boat could never have gotten into. I have never in all my experience seen a duck boat that quite came up to that one for genuine merit. I sold this boat in 1892 to my old friend, Noah White, of Wilmar, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota. I used to stop at his place at Little Kandiyohi Lake, six miles south of Wilmar.

Speaking of Little Kandiyohi, reminds me that that locality was one of the grandest places for duck and geese I ever saw. It is located about 100 miles west of St. Paul on the Great Northern Road. It used to be famous for many years, and a club was formed of St. Paul and Winona men who went there regularly. I shot there several seasons and also at Big Kandiyohi Lake, about four miles from there, which was a noted resort for geese.

The Celebrated Kandiyohi Pass.

Kandiyohi used to be almost as well known to Minnesota duck hunters as the Illinois River was to Illinois shooters. Many sloughs, ponds and shallow, grassy lakes made it a great resort for mallard, teal, pintail and gadwall, and on the large lakes were many canvasbacks and redheads.

I went to Kandiyohi the first time in October, 1889. I had long desired to see the famous "Kandiyohi Pass" described by Charles A. Zimmerman many years before in an old number of Harper's Magazine. Zimmerman went out there with a party of friends in 1877 and afterwards wrote up his experiences. He told many interesting incidents and one, especially, that always impressed me. Three geese headed for his blind. He tried to change his duck loads for goose ammunition, but in his haste got a swelled shell stuck fast in the breech of his gun and had the mortification, he says, of "seeing the geese sail over a rod or two above his head, close enough to have used the duck loads with deadly effect." Zimmerman was an artist as well as a duck hunter and made a sketch of this scene as he imagined it must have looked to his companions. He called it "A Tight Shell." A reprint of the original picture used to stand in the window of Eaton's gun store in Chicago, together with a companion picture called "A Side Shot." They were beautifully done in colors and faithful in every detail. I used to admire

these pictures often and even go out of my way to look at them. I little thought then that I should some day stand perhaps on the same ground that Zimmerman stood when he became the chief actor in the scene of "A Tight Shell." Zimmerman illustrated his article on Kandiyohi with pencil sketches among which was one of the famous "Pass." This sketch is reproduced in Alfred Mayer's "Sport With Gun and Rod in American Woods and Waters." A bridge of heavy timbers crossed the narrows, or neck, of the Pass and constituted that part of it called "The Bridge Stand." Ducks were always trading here, back and forth, their number depending on the time of day and weather condition. Plenty of evidence of the great sport was always to be seen here by the quantity of shells lying about on the planking.

On my first trip out there I did all my shooting on Little Kandiyohi Lake, stopping with a farmer whose place was located on the south shore of the lake about two miles from the Pass. The lake was bordered with a heavy growth of rushes, the shore line irregular, with points reaching out into open water, affording the finest of decoy shooting from natural blinds. I went out there again in 1890 and that year the flight seemd to be heavier in the direction of Big Kandiyohi, which is in a straight line four miles south. As we drove up to Big Kandiyohi Lake the first time I went there, I shall never forget the unusual sight, even for that time and locality, of at least a thousand—and in reality probably many more—geese in practically one mass; some flying, but most of them rafted like ducks about a quarter of a mile out from shore. As we drove through a fringe of willows and out into plain sight, a great flock of Canadas were just arriving. As they swung over the mass another big flock arose from the water and then bedlam let loose! The outcries of the geese mingled with that of the brant and Hutchins geese sent a deafening babble of wild cries across the water hard to describe. Anyone unfamiliar with such a scene could have faint conception of the uproar and pandemonium that reigned.

A Red-Letter Day Among the Waterfowl.

On a later day, in a small marshy lake of about two miles in extent, lying to the north of Big Kandiyohi, I spent a "red-letter" day among the ducks. After watching the flight for a time to determine a good location, I finally pushed my boat into thick rushes on a point on the east side and about half way to the north end. A good forty yards of open water lay in front of the blind, while behind me grew thick rushes. I got into this location about 9 o'clock. The wind, which was from the north, had been increasing since sunrise and was now blowing a gale, threshing off the ends of rice stalks and flags and whipping the water into white caps. The ducks were leaving the open water on Big Kandiyohi and, as is their custom on windy days, were flying low, seeking shelter from the wind as far to windward as possible. This brought past my blind many mallard, teal, gadwall, pintail and other ducks. I shot at no duck flying behind me, nor at any that I figured, if killed, would drop in the rushes, for they could not have been recovered without great difficulty, if at all. I made no attempt to pick them up owing to the high wind and the fact that they could drift no further than the solid mass of rushes on my left. I had a hard time picking up as it was at the close of my shooting. I figured that fully as many flew behind as in front of me; and after allowing for some that must have been wounded, or merely winged, and got away clear, and the further fact that I quit shooting about 3:30 P. M., yet I recovered some forty odd birds, as I remember it now. I have often thought of that day which, for the number of ducks I saw, and the number I could probably have killed had I minded to shoot at all that flew within range, and those I did kill and was able to make use of, I consider one of the many red-letter "ducking days" of my long experience.

THE CHESAPEAKE BAY DOG

WILLIAM C. HAZELTON

THE Chesapeake Bay dogs are the one distinctly American breed of dogs originating this side of the water and developing here. They have been bred here for about one hundred years. Their history is party authentic and party traditional. Their progenitors were taken from a ship which had foundered at sea.

A Chesapeake flat in ducking weather is another edition of the Atlantic in the grip of a nor'easter. This is the native habitat of the Chesapeake Bay retriever. These are the conditions which have made him what he is. It has taken a hundred years and more to develop him. The result, as might be expected, is a dog much different in type from other dogs and of distinctly high efficiency for the purpose in view. He has to be big and powerful, considering those miles of water travel after crippled ducks and the half-hour swims in ice-cold water, with perhaps six or eight dives to a depth of six or eight feet each time.

It is not muscle alone, either, for a lot of it is his spirit. You can't take the heart out of him. He is not sensitive or easily insulted, as a collie sometimes is, and no amount of chill, slush, hard ice, snow, tide, waves or undertow or current will feaze him very much. He will stand baffling, which is more than many dogs will stand. As long as he has his beloved water, with its chances for paddling about and living, the vicissitudes of life do not worry him much. He will not quit work from a lack of courage, and he has the stamina to stick it out under the worst conditions all day long.

Most Tractable of Dogs.

In general they depend more on their keen eyes than on their nose, marking the game as it falls. In the blind they are obdedient to a superb extent—almost to the point which convinces you that they understand what is required as well as you do, or a little better. When you have shot for a while and told your Chesapeake to "go fetch," he rises to his feet and calmly surveys the field. He goes for the cripples first and gathers his harvent in systematically by rounds.

Thanks to a coterie of sportsmen in the Middle and Far West, and particularly in Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas, interest in this great breed of retrievers has not lapsed. Many excellent specimens are bred by A. L. Beverly, Sanborn, Iowa; Ray Leonard, Avoca, Iowa; Earl Henry, Albert Lea, Minn.; F. E. Richmond, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and others. Edward Gibb of Suffolk, N. Y., is a prominent Eastern breeder.

Daniel W. Voorhees, of Peoria, Ill., president of The Duck Island Preserve on the Illinois River, and who owns many fine dogs, writes concerning his Chesapeake Bay dog: "Man 'o War is a great retriever, and is, besides, the smartest dog I ever owned. He knows more than any dog I have ever seen."

J. F. Parks wrote concerning these grand dogs:

"The Chesapeake Bay dog has been developed to a very high state of perfection on the shores of Chesapeake Bay and has been used as retrievers by duck hunters in that locality for a great many years.

"In color they range from a deep seal brown down through the varying shades of brown to a very light sedge or 'faded buffalo' color, and in coat from the smooth, wavy, short coat to the heavy thick coat, resembling very much the sheep pelt. These dogs have what is known as the double or otter coat, the under coat being very thick and furlike, while the other coat is of coarse hair. This difference in color and coat seems to occur in almost every litter of puppies, and just why this is so seems a mystery.

"The thoroughbred Chesapeake is absolutely fearless and was never known to quit under the most trying conditions. Deep mud, tangled rice beds and rushes, as well as extreme cold, has no terrors for them.

"In order to be in a position to fully appreciate these dogs, one must come in actual contact with them and enjoy their companionship. They are, without doubt, the wisest dogs in existence, and as companions, they are simply in a class by themselves. As a rule, they are what is known among sportsmen as 'one-man' dogs. That is, they recognize but one master, and when they are properly trained to retrieve, an owner need not worry about getting his own duck when shooting with others in a marsh or on a river.

"I have seen these dogs break ice an inch thick for a distance of fifty yards going after a duck and then turn around and break a new channel through the ice, back to me with the duck, and repeat the feat as often as they were called upon to do so; in fact, I have yet to see a retrieve so tough but what they would make the attempt at it, and if a physical possibility for them to accomplish it they always returned with the bird."

Opinion of Veteran Eastern Sportsman.

George L. Hopper, of Havre de Grace, Md., has the following to say of these splendid dogs:

"Anything regarding the Chesapeake Bay dog will prove especially interesting to all the old-time Maryland and Virginia sportsmen who were born and raised upon the banks of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; from these waters a greater variety of good things can be had, with less effort, than any spot or place upon God's green earth. The most of us can recall the name and characteristics of some certain Chesapeake Bay dog which was among our boon companions during our boyhood days, when we frolicked and whiled away the blossom of youth.

"That the Chesapeake Bay retriever is the greatest of water dogs is undoubtedly owing to the great strength of his forelegs and powerful shoulders, but more especially to that peculiar and unexplicable furlike under coat, through which an oily substance is mixed, like unto the down of a duck, not natural to any other breed of dogs, which enables him to withstand the most rigorous weather during the ducking season. He is most especially appreciated by us old-time fellows for his knowledge of the art of tolling the ducks within gunshot, and they take to tolling as naturally as the setter does to pointing quail. No fox can be more skillful and cunning..

"During freezing weather the icicles do not form on the outer coat of the smooth-coated dog, as they do on the rough or curly-coated. But it seems to make no difference to 'Old Curly.' He may tremble with excitement when the ducks are about to dart into the decoys, but he never shivers and suffers from the cold wind and icicles sticking to his coat. I cannot recall at this writing of having ever seen a Chesapeake Bay retriever afflicted with canker of the ear, with which other dogs will surely become afflicted if permitted to retrieve from the water for any great length of time."

In disposition the Chesapeakes are most extraordinary. They are never vicious or quarrelsome with dogs or people. They simply want to be let alone. To them life begins and ends tolling and retrieving ducks.

The smooth, wavy, shortcoated dogs are the most desired by some, because they can more thoroughly shake off the water and dry out more quickly.

WILDFOWL IN A STORM ON NEW ENGLAND COAST

HERBERT R. JOB

I WISH I could adequately describe a scene which I witnessed on the old Pilgrim coast at Manomet one 5th of November. Flying gray clouds covered the sky. The wind was northeast, and increasing every hour A few boats went out early, but soon came in, as the sea was becoming dangerous. Low over the frothing ocean flew lines and lines of wildfowl, scudding from the north before the blasts. They were in sight all the time. Before one flock had passed southward, several more were to be seen coming, at times six or eight flocks in sight at once.

By 10 o'cock the rain began to beat spitefully on our faces as we stood on the bluff with awed spirits watching Nature in her passion. By noon the wind had reached hurricane force. Flocks of fowl were fairly hurled in over the rocks, many of them to be shot down by the "station" men and others, who stood ready. I made no effort to estimate the number of that day's flight. Thousands upon thousands of ducks were there, and of all kinds. The surf thundered in upon the rocks, and clouds of spray flew up over the top of the bluff.

In the morning when I opened the door and stepped out, a blast struck me that made me gasp for breath and cling to the railing. Blinded with the stinging sleet, I could not see whether fowl were flying or not. A neighboring barn had disappeared, lying in fragments on the rocks around the Point. Everything was white with snow. Winter had come upon land, ocean and wildfowl.

FORTY-THREE YEARS

ERNEST McGAFFEY

Forty-three years I've followed the gun,
Rain and hail and the sleet and sun;
Winds that blew from the Northland harsh
Wrinkling the face of the dreaming marsh,
Reflex warm of the sun's bright shields
Shining down on the stubble-fields,
Brakes where the round-eyed woodcock lay
Dimly veiled from the light of day:
Seasons beckon me, one by one,
Forty-three years I've followed the gun.

Forty-three years I've followed the gun,
Warp and woof by the woodland spun;
Lakes where the bluebills curve and wheel,
Arrowy flight of the greenwing teal,
Pasture lands where the jacksnipe hide,
Grassy stretch of the prairies wide,
Blackberry vines by the orchard swale,
Bursting rise of the buzzing quail:
Seasons vanishing, one by one,
Forty-three years I've followed the gun.

Forty-three years I've followed the gun,
Flush of dawn or the daynight done;
Cane-brake chase of the lumbering bear
Roused from the swamp to leave his lair,
Knolls where the turkeys scratched and fed,
Gobbling loud as the east grew red,
Honking files of the south-bound geese
Shrouded soft in the cloud's gray fleece:
Seasons beckon me, one by one,
Forty-three years I've followed the gun.

Forty-three years I've followed the gun,
Peaks and cliffs in the questing won;
Purple vaults that the distance blurs,
Blue grouse under the Douglas firs,
Tracks that carve in the clearing sere
Clean-cut sign of the black-tail deer,
Mallards packed like the hiving bees
Climbing high o'er the sundown seas:
Seasons beckoning, one by one,
Forty-three years I've followed the gun.