

SCIENTIFIC DUCK SHOOTING
IN EASTERN WATERS.

RUSSELL SCUDDER NYE.

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SCIENTIFIC DUCK SHOOTING

IN

EASTERN WATERS.

BY

RUSSELL SCUDDER NYE.

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TO

A. B. T.,

In recognition of a highly esteemed friendship and as a token of my most sincere regard, this book is dedicated, with the best wishes of

THE AUTHOR.

Falmouth, September 3, 1895.

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PREFACE.

It has been said on good authority that a man will go farther to kill a duck than to do anything else in the world. However true that may be certain it is that among no class of sportsmen is there to be found greater ardor and enthusiasm than among the duck shooting fraternity.

Of all the duck species which inhabit the waters of this country, the black duck, *Anas Obscura*, or black mallard as it is commonly called in the West, and of which the following chapters principally treats, is the hardest to circumvent and bring to bag. Of an exceedingly shy and wary disposition, made so from the fact he seldom frequents deep waters but is usually to be found in shallow lakes and streams in close proximity to marshes covered with waving grass or tall rushes and wooded shores, whose projecting points may at any time conceal an enemy, this grand bird has learned never to consider himself safe without a long reach of water intervening between him and the danger-lurking shore.

The difficulties which attend his capture however only

serve to make him the more a prize to be sought after, and especially dear to the heart of the eastern gunner, to whom he is regarded as the most desirable of his species. In order therefore that his pursuit may be attended with success it is necessary that the sportsman should use the most scientific methods yet known to the art of wild fowl shooting, which in the case of the black duck in eastern waters is without doubt the use of live decoys.

Among the many localities scattered along the entire length of the Atlantic seaboard where the sport of duck shooting can still be engaged with pleasure and profit, there is probably no more favored locality than Cape Cod, whose wave-washed shores abounding in sheltered coves and quiet bays, with partially submerged marshes extending far inland, and flats, made bare by the receding tides, offer to the wild fowl feeding grounds unsurpassed in variety and abundance, while the many lakes and ponds which lie snugly sheltered among the low lying hills and uplands furnish an abundant supply of fresh water, a luxury which *Anas Obscura* will not deny himself of, for any length of time, he being willing to take extraordinary risks after having been deprived of his bath for a few days.

It was at such a lake as I have here described. one of the fairest among the many lovely sheets of water that nestle deep among the Cape Cod hills, that in company with boon companions I was permitted to enjoy for several successive seasons what is to me the sport par excellence, duck shooting over live decoys.

THE AUTHOR.

SCIENTIFIC DUCK SHOOTING IN EASTERN WATERS.

CHAPTER I.

“ These are the tales, or new or old,
In idle moments idly told,
Flowers of the field with petals thin,
Lilies that neither toil nor spin.”

IT was a warm, sunny day in October—one of those bright, beautiful days for which our New England autumns are noted. We were sitting in the office, looking wistfully out of the window at the ever-changing panorama of sea and sky, woods and fields, over which the hush of autumn had fallen, and wishing most of all for a vacation. The office-boy came in with the mail and, running it over leisurely, we noticed the familiar handwriting of an old friend and sportsman; and, eagerly opening the letter, it was found to contain an invitation to spend a few days with him in camp at Coleman's Island, for duck shooting. It did not take us long to decide, and the next mail carried to our friend a glad acceptance of his kind invitation; and the

following day found us at the Falmouth station, on the Woods Holl branch of the Old Colony Railroad, laden with guns, amunition and our light baggage—for we always travel light when on a sporting trip, believing thoroughly in the sage advice of 'Nessmuck,' that we do not go to the woods to rough it, but to smooth it, and that an excess of camp equipage is a useless incumbrance. We reached Buzzards Bay shortly after eight o'clock, and there had to wait nearly three hours for the down train, which would leave us at West Barnstable, from which we would cross to the South Shore by stage. We reached Centreville, our boyhood's home, shortly after noon and not too late for dinner; and, after spending the remainder of the afternoon in rambing about the village and looking up old acquaintances, found ourselves at Gardner's store early in the evening, that being the general rendezvous for all the sportsmen in the neighborhood. Receiving a warm welcome from Gardner, we spent the evening with him, learning from him that the ducks were coming in quite plentifully, and that the afternoon-flight that day had contributed several pairs of black ducks to his already well-stocked larder.

Bidding us to be on hand by four o'clock the next morning, we part for the night, and, going to our stopping-place, are soon asleep and dreaming of ducks. The little alarm clock at our side awakens us with a sudden start just as we are in the act of making a most extraordinary shot at an imaginary flock of black ducks, and springing to our feet we find it is already growing light and nearly four o'clock; so, hastily donning our shooting garb and making

a raid on the pantry, we secure our gun and make our exit into the open air without disturbing the sleeping inmates. We find the morning raw and cold, the stars looking down at us in a hazy sort of way, and the wind, which is slightly breezing from the northeast, predicts a storm; but it is good duck weather and we tramp along in anticipation of plenty of sport before the morning is over, and reaching Gardner's house, find him just in readiness to start. So, whistling up the dog, a brown and white shaggy-coated retriever, we shoulder our guns and start along the turnpike, reaching in a few minutes the woodland path which leads to the pond, the shores of which we reach after a half-hour's tramp.

The water was so low this year that the use of a boat was not necessary in order to reach the island, as with top boots one could easily wade across the narrow neck of land separating the island from the mainland, and by picking out the shallow places, which we are obliged to do by feeling for them in the darkness with the toe of our boot, we succeeded in getting across dry and without creating any perceptible noise, which at this point was a great desideratum, being in such close proximity to the shooting grounds; for the black duck must be approached with the utmost silence and caution, else a startled quack and roar of wings of the frightened flock will be the only reward of the chagrined hunter, in place of the successful shot and well-earned bag of ducks. For this reason, if for no other, in black duck shooting it is always desirable to camp near the shooting-grounds, so as to be on hand in the morning, and

to have all arrangements completed and absolute silence reigning supreme by the first streaks of daylight, for by that time the birds are liable to be moving and coming in, if indeed they have not already come in during the night and are snugly ensconced, with heads under their wing, under the friendly shelter of some clump of some lily-pads or water rushes.

Owing, however, to the limited time we had to stay and the press of business that kept our friend engaged evenings, we had departed from the usual order of things on this occasion, and were spending our nights at the village, though on all our visits since to this celebrated resort we have endeavored to spend the nights in camp, the results of which will appear in subsequent chapters; but we are digressing, and will go back and take up the thread of our narrative at the point where, leaving the mainland behind us and crossing the narrow neck only lightly submerged in water, we found ourselves on Coleman's Island with the light faintly breaking in the east.

Stepping carefully up to the shanty door, we unlock it and procure a lantern and the keys of the duck-box, and then, carefully replacing everything as we found it, we step noiselessly along the pathway that leads to the "stand" or "blind," through a network of overhanging branches and bushes deftly arranged to afford ample protection to the gunner in passing to and fro from the "blind," while at the same time it enables him to note all that is transpiring upon the surface of the water in front and around him.

Entering the "stand," which consists of a barricade of

pine trees built nearly to the water's edge, and so deftly covered with branches and bushes as to completely hide its real purpose, the passer-by in a boat at a distance of a hundred yards, or even at fifty, not being able to detect anything unusual about it, the portholes through which the gunner shoots not showing a few rods from the shore, and the entire front of the battery being in exact keeping with the surrounding vegetation. So perfect is the deception that in rowing a boat to them in the night it is oftentimes difficult to exactly locate your own "blind."

By the shaded light of the lantern's feeble rays, the duck-box is opened and the decoy ducks fettered (for all shooting here is done over live decoys), and while Andrew is putting out the decoys we will give you a short description of Wequakett Lake.

It is situated in Barnstable town, in the County of Barnstable, and connects the villages of Centreville and Barnstable. Its shores are for the most part heavily wooded, though there are several good farms along its eastern shore, where an arm of the lake extends nearly to the county road; notable among the farms is that of Mr. Ambrose Lewis, who owns several miles of the lake shore and has a number of acres under a high state of cultivation. The lake, covering in extent an acreage of about nine miles, is one of the largest bodies of fresh water in the State, and is famed chiefly for being a resort for black duck, the most wary, gamey and highest-prized of all the birds that visit New England waters. It is one of the loveliest sheets of water to be found anywhere, its shores thickly

studded with a fine growth of pine, birch and maple, extending down to a beautiful sand beach, white and shining, upon whose shores the miniature billows dance gaily under a summer sun, or are lashed into fury when driven before the violence of a northeast gale in autumn, sending huge breakers, white-capped and tempestuous, to dash upon the shore with a roar like distant thunder. The shore is very prettily broken with many inlets and coves, and on the numerous points that extend out from both sides of the pond are located the different camps of the ducking clubs, notable among which are the Annable's Point, Stony Point, Bliss' Point and Coleman's Island, the scene of our present exploits. Lying close by and contiguous to the lake are Quawk Island and Bears's Pond, the latter being an excellent shooting place when the wind is blowing heavily and it is rough in the big ponds, the birds then seeking the smaller ponds on account of the better shelter afforded. All of these ponds afford fine fishing for white and yellow perch and pickerel, and a large number of people visit them each season with good success. The writer remembers one afternoon in the early part of September, a number of years ago, when, in the company of a friend, he enjoyed as fine fishing as can be found anywhere in the State, we having taken, in a little over an hour, over one hundred fish of good size. If "Joe" should ever happen to fall upon this he will remember the day and the rare sport we had. Upon the northern shore of the pond rises a stately eminence known as Shoot-Flying Hill, from the top of which one can command beautiful views of the surrounding country; in fact, nearly the

whole of Cape Cod is here spread out to view, the scenes in every direction being fine, and seeming to please whichever way you turn. Directly in the foreground, Barnstable Bay stretches away for miles, its surface dotted with vessels from all quarters of the globe presenting a most pleasing and animating picture, while on a clear day the spires of Provincetown, the tip end of Yankee-land, can be plainly seen. An observatory has been erected upon the summit of the hill and a carriage road built to it, so that it is now easy of access, and all visitors to the upper Cape towns or South Shore villages in search of health, pleasure and recreation should not consider their outing complete without having made the ascent of Shoot-Flying Hill.

The Messrs. Marston of Centreville have recently purchased large tracts of lands adjoining these waters, and have laid out a road running through the woods on the eastern shore, which furnishes one of the most delightful drives to be found anywhere on Cape Cod. These gentlemen have also built a commodious boat-house on the southern shore of the lake, and have several fast yachts and a steam launch there, the lake offering fine facilities for pleasure sailing and racing.

Coleman's Island is owned by Mr. Andrew B. Gardner of Centreville, he having purchased the entire property several years ago. The island is covered with a sturdy growth of pine forest, and from a scenic point of view is, we think, the finest location about the lake. It is acknowledged also to be one of the best points from which to shoot ducks, and fortunate is the sportsman who receives

from Mr. Gardner an invitation to spend a few days with him at this sylvan retreat.

But as daylight is now fast approaching, and Andrew having placed the decoys to his liking has returned to the stand, we will lay aside all further digression and proceed at once to the business of the morning. We can now plainly hear the quacking of the decoy ducks at Annable's Point and, turning the glass in that direction, can just make out a flock of ducks swimming in to the decoys. In a few minutes they are near enough, and, as they draw together, a sheet of flame bursts from the portholes of the "blind" and a moment later we hear the report of the guns, and by the aid of the glass can see the occupants of the stand rush out upon the shore and send their dog into the water and retrieve the killed and wounded. The balance of the flock, which of course flew at the report of the guns are now circling high in the air at the farther end of the lake, when suddenly four of their number leave the flock and wheel in our direction, with the evident intention of going into the Sound, instead of back into the bay. As they draw near Gardner hastily reaches for a decoy and throwing it high in the air it alights by the side of its fellows with many a splash and quack. It does the business, for the four wild ducks have seen the decoys and come on with a rush, seemingly having forgotten the danger from which they have so lately escaped, and, coming up side to the wind, they drop easily in among the decoys and swim boldly toward the "blind," where we lie concealed. We take our places at the portholes and, waiting for them to draw together, Gardner gives

the word and we fire simultaneously, and rising quickly to our feet see but one duck in the air—and that one going at about sixty miles an hour, close to the water and already fifty yards away. We sent the contents of our remaining barrels after him which serves no purpose except to accelerate his flight, and then turned and opened the door of the “blind” at which the faithful spaniel is eagerly scratching, and, bidding him “Go fetch the birds,” he at once swam boldly out and brought them in, one at a time, and laid them at our feet with a proud and knowing look which seemed to say “Have I not done well?” As we took them up and stroked their glossy feathers we felt consoled for the loss of the one that sailed away with an utter disregard for the effectiveness of our breech-loaders, in the possession of the three that remained with us.

It was now light enough to see all over the lake, and we began to see ducks constantly moving in all directions; but they did not decoy well, as the wind rose rapidly when the sun came up, and we did not get another shot at black ducks that morning, though we killed one widgeon and a mackerel gull, which curiously enough flew past us and then returned and alighted to the decoys. Whatever prompted him to seek fellowship with a tame duck we do not know, but he paid dearly for his temerity, and his snow-white wing for some time afterwards adorned the hat of a certain young lady of our acquaintance. Several shots were fired at Annable’s and Stony Point, but with no great results—at least, so we judged from what we were able to observe with the glass. But if the shooting was dull there was

enough else to interest us in listening to the anecdotes of Gardner regarding former days when decoys and breech-loaders were unknown and ducks were to be had for the asking. As the morning wore on and the sky assumed a more threatening aspect, we witnessed a grand sight in the passage of an immense flock of water-fowl, whistling coots we judged them to be, though they flew at such a great height that we could not determine for a surety whether they were whistling coots or white-wings, though it is probable that both varieties were represented. They flew steadily for over an hour, three, four and five flocks being in sight all the time. We judged that nearly three thousand birds must have passed over us during the time we stayed in the stand. Had the wind been southeast instead of northeast there would have been some grand shooting on the Centreville beach, as all outward-bound birds pass directly over the beach, following down the course of the river till it reaches the beach and then crossing over into the Sound. It needs a strong souther though to bring them down within gunshot, and then fortunate is the sportsman who finds himself in the precincts of this sequestered spot on a hazy afternoon in October, with the tide at half-flood on the Barnstable flats and rapidly rising; the cosy little village in the foreground with the dark and sluggish river flowing at your feet, the sombre shadows of the pine forest rising to the north, the steep, picturesque bluffs on the right and the roar of old ocean at your back, and the cool, sweet incense of the salt breeze sweeping over the marsh as the moist, damp spray is flung full in your face as some

giant breaker comes dashing in upon the strand, sending huge volumes of yeasty foam high in air and retreating again with sudden roar; the excited motions and gestures of the assembled gunners as they run to and fro to obtain the best point of vantage in the wake of the on-coming flocks of white-wings and whistling coots, sheldrakes, old squaws, mackerel gulls, and, if it be late in the season, brant and geese, as in rapid succession flock succeeds flock; the cries of "Run to the eastward," or "Run to the westward," as the birds are first sighted far in the distance—thin, wedge-shaped columns darkly defined against the October sky, as they move swiftly along with almost military precision, now veering slightly to one direction and then to another, thus giving to the sport the constant element of uncertainty as to where they will pass, until, as they draw near and sight the broad waters of the Sound, they straighten on their course and, lowering their flight, come on with a mighty rush of swiftly beating pinions, while from all sides they are greeted with the flash and roar of fowling-pieces, and, leaving many of their number behind, the remainder of the flock are soon secure from harm far out upon the surface of the broad Atlantic. Many times in years gone by has the writer been a participator in these scenes, the recalling of which now brings a pleasure only equalled by the actual occurrences themselves; and we call to mind that when but a boy and not allowed to carry a gun, it was our chief delight to accompany our grandfather or uncles, all of whom were keen sportsmen and capital shots, and who could always be counted upon to be on hand

on a fine flying-day. and, snugly ensconced among the tall waving beach grass which served as a protection from the cold, have lain for hours, an interested spectator of all that transpired, our senses lulled into a dreamy contentment and repose, wooed by the siren voice of the south wind. Some noted shots used to be present on those days, many of whom have now laid aside the fowling-piece forever, and some of whom yet remain and practice their old-time sport with all the enthusiasm of former days, and who can still drop their doubles right and left, with the same old-time skill that used to be our ever-increasing wonder and admiration.

We watch the last flock disappear in the distance, a mere speck upon the horizon, and are reminded of the poet's lines :—

“ Vainly the fowler's eye might mark thy distant flight to do thee harm,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky, thy figure floats along.”

A sweeping glance with the glass along the horizon and across the surface of the lake, revealing no ducks, Gardner thinks we might as well give it up for this morning ; so the decoys are accordingly taken in, everything is made snug and tidy about the stand, and, stowing our birds inside the capacious pockets of our hunting coats and whistling up the dog who is contentedly taking a nap in the corner of the stand, we shoulder our guns and tramp back to the village, picking up several partridges and and squirrels on our way through the woods, arriving at the village in time for a late breakfast, which is none the less appreciated by being long delayed.

CHAPTER II.

BREAKFAST being over we dress the ducks, turning them over to the culinary department (said department giving a good account of itself later on), and spend the balance of the morning principally in getting rested. At twelve o'clock dinner is announced, to which at least one of the party does ample justice, stewed ducks being the bill of fare.

Contrary to our expectations, the weather had grown milder, the wind veering from the northeast to the southwest, and the angry-looking clouds of the morning had cleared away before the brisk southwester. The sun shone clear and warm, and about two o'clock we strolled around to Gardner's place of business and found him all ready to try the afternoon flight. A few moments sufficed to attend to the wants of several customers who had just come in, and then, whistling for the dog and locking the shop door, we were ready to proceed; but a new difficulty now presented itself. The dog could not be found, and though we

whistled and called, it was to no purpose ; he failed to show up, and we were obliged to go without him. It was not so bad, however, for Gardner kept his boat at the island, and we could retrieve with that, providing we killed any birds.

We enjoyed the tramp through the woods, the weather being perfect ; and, while we had already been over the ground twice that day we did not mind the fatigue, and soon reached the shore. Gaining the point, we started to walk across, when our attention was attracted by a large flock of water fowl that had swum in towards the shore and were now within shooting distance of the margin, if we could but reach it without making our presence known to them. We crept carefully along and gained the island, which, with its dense growth of underbrush and pine forest, afforded us sufficient protection to allow us to reach the desired spot without being seen—by dint of much crawling and worming ourselves along—though it was hard work, as our path was plentifully strewn with briars, which protruded their sharp thorns into our clothing and hands and even into our faces ; one giant and over-hanging limb having the audacity to pluck off our hat and hold it suspended in the air where it was found and recovered on our return. But we pushed bravely on amidst all obstacles, till we reached a place from which we could shoot, and then carefully raising our heads, found that the birds had taken alarm and swum out beyond gun-shot.

This was disappointing, but there was no help for it so we tramped back to where we left the path, and regaining it soon reached the camp, or “shanty,” as Gardner termed

it. Putting his hand to his pocket for the key, he turned to us with a look of blank amazement depicted on his countenance, at the same time ejaculating "I have left the key at home!" Here was a dilemma, as Gardner's favorite gun was inside, together with the ammunition and oars, and as the dog had of necessity been left behind, we were dependent entirely upon the boat for retrieving—and that would also be worthless without the important adjunct of oars and rowlocks.

We were not to be baffled, however, for inside that shanty we must go, and after surveying the situation for a few moments we decided that the small window at the end of the building was the most vulnerable point of attack; upon this we at once made a vigorous sortie, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing our labors rewarded by the removal of the entire window intact. The member of the company carrying the least *avoirdupois* was prevailed upon to crawl through the narrow aperture and produce the much-required articles, which feat was successfully accomplished by dint of much vigorous squeezing, and having become possessed of them we proceeded at once to the stand and took a long look over the quiet surface of the lake, hoping to see a bird or two.

The field-glass failing to show up anything that looked like ducks, we fettered two of the best quackers and putting them out in the water at a proper distance from each other returned to the stand to enjoy the fine landscape spread out before us. It was almost too warm and pleasant for ducks to be about in very large numbers, and we did not

expect to do a great amount of shooting, being well content to leisurely while away the hours in the full enjoyment of the calm and peaceful autumnal scene. The decoys, too, seemed to imbibe the general listlessness that pervaded everything, for they soon tired of quacking to an unresponsive echo, and settling themselves low in the water, with heads tucked under their wings, rode lightly at anchor with a low, cooing sound of evident satisfaction.

An hour or two of constant scanning of the horizon failing to bring into relief the graceful outlines of the game we sought, we at last bethought ourselves of the birds we had left in the cove, and our companion volunteered to go back to the point from which we had first sighted them and see if they were still there. He soon returned with the information that they were in about the same position as when first discovered, and thought that by taking the boat we could row to the windward of them and thus get near enough for a shot.

We pushed out from the shore with as little noise as possible and pulled up into the bend, Gardner at the oars, and finally succeeded in getting to windward of them, and, drifting down in their direction, got within gunshot just as they rose. Gardner quickly dropped the oars and together we fired, knocking out several of the flock. They proved to be white-winged coots, big fellows and in fine order, being plump and fat. Securing our game we hastened back to the stand, and hauling the boat well up out of sight in the bushes took up our watch in the "blind" again; but we were not rewarded with a shot, as nothing came to us,

though we saw a few circling about in the air. While we did our best to attract their attention, they seemingly took no notice of us, and though our decoys stretched their necks and quacked vociferously, they would not be beguiled into making a closer acquaintance, no doubt preferring the wild freedom of their aerial flight to the possible dangers that might lurk about the shores of Coleman's Island.

So, as the sun was sinking behind the treetops that skirted the western shore, we drove out the ducks and let them have a bath, and after seeing them safely back in their quarters and having made everything snug and tidy, we wended our way to the village. We separated at Andrew's shop, agreeing to be on hand at four o'clock the next morning.

Somehow we overslept on this particular morning, awakening to find it considerably past the hour agreed upon. We tumbled into our clothes as lively as we knew how, and were soon out in the open air and headed for the appointed rendezvous, which we reached only to have our suspicions confirmed, that our friend, fearing we would not show up till too late for the early morning flight, had gone on without us. He had taken the precaution, however, to place our guns outside and standing against the door, where we would be sure to find them if we came along. Seizing them we hastened on in the direction we knew he had taken, hoping to overtake him before he reached the lake; but he had too much start, and after floundering around amongst the wet underbrush, sometimes in the path and again out of it, and thumping against trees and overhanging

branches, stepping into holes and winding ourselves up in green briars—for it was intensely dark in the woods—we finally came out upon the lake shore, and with a little difficulty found the path that led onto the island and entered the stand about fifteen minutes behind Gardner, and just as daylight was breaking in the east.

The decoys were out and doing nicely, and as soon as it was light enough to see with the glass we took a careful look around the lake and discovered, about a hundred yards distant, what appeared to be a small bunch of ducks, though we could not tell for a certainty, as the appearance of the water is very deceptive early in the morning, and what we have often taken for a bunch of ducks has proved to be only the edge of a wave suddenly imbued with seeming life by the momentary shadows that are occasionally thrown across it; and again we have been startled to see what but a moment before appeared to be but a patch of black water suddenly start and set in towards us with all the grace and symmetry that is to be found only in the movements of the wild duck. But there is no deception this time, as the dark and shadowy outline moves nearer and takes definite shape. The ducks, for such they proved to be, having satisfied their curiosity, now swim boldly in towards the decoys, and are in a few minutes near enough to shoot.

We take our respective places and are chagrined to find that we cannot see our sights, the light being insufficient as yet, owing to the heavy mass of foliage behind us; and as we dare not risk a shot under these circumstances,

knowing full well that we should be almost certain to overshoot, we are obliged to content ourselves with watching their movements and waiting for daylight. There was but little danger of the ducks leaving as long as we made no noise, so we settled down to wait and curb our impatience.

We remained thus for several minutes, when a sudden movement on the part of the retriever, who lay snugly ensconced at our feet, caused us to look quickly out through the port-holes, when we discovered to our dismay that the birds had suddenly taken alarm and were swimming rapidly away. Thrusting our gun barrels through the narrow apertures in the "blind," we had the satisfaction of finding that the sights showed plain and true, and at a quick signal from our companion we fired simultaneously and stopped five of the fleeing birds, two of which required the services of the second barrel before they were dead ducks. As there were only seven in the bunch we had shot well and had no reason to complain; for we know of nothing better calculated to try the skill and rattle the nerves of the most experienced duck-shot than this shooting at swimming birds from a "blind," in the uncertain light of early morning, and we have yet to see the man proficient enough in the art to account himself a dead shot under these circumstances.

Grand and glorious the sport is—black duck shooting over live decoys—a sport which, in the skill and science and amount of patient toil involved, together with the necessary amount of hardships that must be encountered in order to circumvent the natural instincts of this the most

wary of all the duck species ; the weary hours of watching and waiting, amid storm and cold, calling for extreme fortitude and the most hardy requisites of the sportsman ; the uncertainty which always attaches to the obtaining of a favorable shot, even after the utmost skill has been exercised on the part of the hunter ; and again on the other hand the fact of being brought face to face with nature in her utmost solitudes, in all her most variable moods ; the ever-changing panorama of sea and sky, of lake and stream and marsh and forest, crowned hill and shore, the glorious daybreak and the gorgeous sunset, followed by the calm, clear and serene moon-lit evenings, during which some of the very best shooting is to be had,—these and a thousand other things that go towards making a successful day's duck shooting, all combine to form what, to our minds, is the par excellence of field sport, a sport that is by no means to be measured by the amount of game bagged.

We retrieve our game and admire the contour of their graceful forms, the outstretched neck and small, finely-shaped head that is such a certain mark of their identity when in flight, at once distinguishing them from any other species when first brought within the range of vision, a mere speck upon the horizon's verge, the delicate bluish-green markings of the wing-coverts and soft shading colors of the mottled breast, and almost feel some compunctions of conscience at having deprived of life such beautiful creatures ; but the feelings of a sportsman are transcendent over all others, and we put the birds aside and again take our respective positions in the "blind" with field-glass in hand,

noting each flock as it appears, now seeming to advance, and again circling wide, and finally disappearing attogther.

An occasional puff of smoke is seen, followed by a sullen boom borne across the water from the direction of our neighbor's stand, telling us in unmistakable terms that they are 'in it,' and as roar succeeds roar we know that they are having a jolly time. Soon we sight a pair of ducks coming directly towards us, and though our rivals try hard to turn them, by throwing decoy after decoy, they will not be persuaded but come steadily on and drop right in among our decoys; we wait for a few moments to allow them to separate from the decoys and to get at a sufficient distance from them to enable us to shoot without killing our own birds, and then, they having swam to Gardner's side of the "blind," making it difficult for us to obtain a fair shot, we give him the word and he fires, killing them both.

The sun has now risen, throwing its warm rays over the chill autumnal scene, and we are grateful for its benign rays; for it is decidedly cool in the stand, the ground beneath us being damp, and our scant quarters affording us but little room for exercise. We wait patiently, but in vain, for another shot, and as the morning is now pretty well advanced and the quail and partridge gunners in the woods are getting rather noisy, shot after shot following each other in quick succession, we conclude to take in the decoys and leave the field clear for our neighbors across the way, as our chance for another shot this morning is well-nigh hopeless, owing to the lateness of the hour and the noise that is going on in the woods on our side of the lake. So the rou-

tine of snugging up the camp is once more gone through with, and we wend our way back to the village again, not without some feelings of regret ; for this is our last morning at the lake, and we have had a pleasant trip. We part with our friend at his shop door, and having attended to the packing of our luggage and said good bye all around, we are soon speeding away towards home, having accepted an invitation to come again next year.

CHAPTER III.

A YEAR elapsed before we saw Coieman's Island again, when one bright, beautiful day in October, a letter came from Gardner saying that the next week he should be at liberty, and that he proposed putting in the whole week in camp, and invited us to join him. So, hastily arranging matters, we left on the next day and arrived at West Barnstable early in the evening, in a drizzling rainstorm. Hunting up the Centreville stage and driver we were soon on our way across the Cape. The rain continued to pour steadily, and the night settling down black as ink made our progress necessarily slow, as the roads were muddy and sticky, and in some places badly gullied.

We plied the driver with questions in regard to the shooting, and found that he was receiving ducks daily from different camps, to be sent by express to absent members of the several ducking clubs located at Wequakett Lake. This augured well, for we knew that if a flight was on, Coleman's Island was sure to come in for a share; and our

spirits rose accordingly with each mile that lessened the distance between the coach and our destination. At last the stage rolled into the village and drew up at the post-office at precisely eight o'clock, and on getting out we found that the rain had about ceased, though the darkness was still dense. Making our way to Gardner's shop we received a hearty welcome from as jolly and hearty a crowd of sportsmen as ever gathered of an evening to "swap lies" and recount old-time experiences.

After getting thoroughly warmed around the glowing stove, which from its cavernous depths was throwing out its grateful warmth in immense volumes of heat, Gardner remarked that as there were no ducks at Coleman's Island that morning it was sure to be our turn to-morrow.

The camp had been put in thorough readiness and was well provisioned, we having sent down a good-sized box of canned goods, pickles, coffee and other necessaries, as well as luxuries, of camp life the day before, which our friend had transferred to camp that day. The only time that we are really hungry is when in camp, and we believe in having enough to eat then. We concluded after a chat to go into camp that night, and avoid the early start we should be compelled to make the next morning. Besides the weather might not be any better if we waited, and once there we could defy the storm or wind, and be on the spot if the ducks came.

Accordingly, we made ready to start, first tucking our trousers inside our stockings and drawing our rubber overshoes well up around our ankles to protect us from the wet

and dripping underbrush, for Andrew was a veteran soldier, and knew how to keep dry feet on a march. Then, turning the care of the shop over to his eldest son, we started on the most wet and darksome tramp through the woods that it has ever been our lot to experience. The dog led the way, Andrew followed with a lantern, while we brought up the rear, loaded with gripsack, ammunition-case and gun, which, as we struggled and floundered along through the woods, vainly endeavoring to keep the path, momentarily grew heavier, until by the time half the distance had been traveled, the weight we were carrying seemed to have increased to nearly a ton. Had not all been articles well-nigh indispensable to a man bound on a week's cruise after ducks, we doubt not that they would have all been unceremoniously thrown into the woods so great had the burden become ; but we reached the camp at last without accident or incident, other than those already mentioned, with the exception, perhaps, of a pair of lame ankles and well-blistered hands.

Getting inside the shanty we at once proceeded to divest ourselves of all superfluities, and pile our luggage in a heap in one corner of the room. Gardner filled the oil stove, and lighting it, we soon had light and heat sufficient for our frugal needs. We prepared the coffee and breaking into the stores produced a can of tongue and a loaf of bread.

By this time the coffee was steaming hot, and as our long walk had sharpened our appetites, we at once fell to and proceeded to demolish everything but the dishes, which we carried to the lake shore and thoroughly washed,

so as to have them ready for use the next morning. This duty attended to, we unpacked and put together our guns, overhauled our ammunition, and put both where they would be safe and at the same time easy of access; then we each picked the most comfortable seat we could find, and, lighting a cigar, proceeded to enjoy the greatest of camp luxuries, the evening smoke.

Neither of us felt in the least sleepy, so we sat for nearly two hours smoking and spinning yarns. Gardner related his first experience in shooting ducks at the lake, when but a lad of ten years. It was before the days of breech-loaders and live decoys, when there were a hundred ducks where there is now one, and before any of the present camps had been built. It was no uncommon sight then to see several hundred ducks in the lake at one time. By crawling out to the end of any projecting point and lying concealed in the bushes, one would be almost certain to secure a good shot.

Annable's Point was then, as it is now, considered the best location, and to this point the senior Mr. Gardner, or "Uncle" Gardner, as the boys used affectionately to call him (for he was known and liked by every boy for miles around, always having a kind word for them and a never-failing stock of stories, which he ever delighted in relating to them, in the dryest and most humorous style imaginable, at once winning their confidence,) to this point "Uncle" Gardner and several other noted shots were wont to repair at early morn or just at dusk, accompanied by a water spaniel trained to run up and down the shore by repeatedly

throwing a stick for him to bring, repeating the process as fast as the stick was retrieved. By these manœuvres the attention of the ducks would be attracted towards the shore, the entire flock at times swimming in within easy gunshot, intent on watching the movements of the dog, and at a given signal the concealed hunters would pour in a deadly fire, and this process could be repeated several times, thus making it no unusual thing for a hunter and his dog to bag forty or fifty ducks of a morning.

Of course that is all changed now, the ever decreasing number of ducks being caused by the rapid settling up of territories that were once wild and offered complete protection to myriads of wild fowl, together with the constantly increasing army of gunners where once but a few engaged in the sport. The use of live decoys also, which in the last few years has entirely supplanted the old-fashioned method of tolling with a dog, has made the ducks so shy that we doubt if a flock could now be successfully decoyed in Wequakett Lake by the old-fashioned methods. These facts, coupled with the immense superiority of the modern breech-loader over the clumsy and uncertain flint-lock and percussion-cap musket of our fathers, the breech-loader now being in active use all over the country, the ducks are never out of earshot of their death-dealing notes from the time they leave their breeding places in the north until they rest their tired pinions in the everglades of the south at the close of their long and harrassed flight, their ranks sadly thinned. All this has tended to greatly diminish the sport of duck shooting, and we shall never again see on this con-

minent the magnificent sport that lay at our very doors but a short generation ago.

It was upon such a morning as we have just described that our friend, in the full pride and consciousness of possessing his first gun, a queen's-arm musket which required all his strength to bring to his shoulder, sallied out in company with his father and a neighbor—also a noted shot—to take his first lesson in duck shooting.

As the party neared the long, narrow and heavily-wooded point of land known as Annable's Point, where now is located the fine camp of the Brockton Club, they discovered through an opening in the trees an immense flock of black ducks, quietly feeding within easy gunshot of the shore.

The utmost caution was now necessary in order to approach the birds without giving an alarm, and accordingly the hunters dropped on their hands and knees, crawling along through the bushes towards the end of the point, our friend bringing up the rear of the procession, with the neighbor before mentioned just ahead.

Gardner in his excitement had brought his gun to full cock, and unmindful of what he was about was pushing the gun along in front of him, with the muzzle within a few inches of his companion's head, when the latter, suddenly turning, found himself looking into the deadly tube of the old musket. This raised the old man's dander, and, bringing his arm around, he dealt our young sportsman a stnning blow that knocked the offending gun completely out of his hands and sent him reeling into the bushes.

Gathering himself together as fast as his scattered senses would permit, he hurried on after the others, taking care to carry his gun where it would be a little less likely to do damage in case it was accidentally discharged, and reached the shore in time to take a hand in shooting at the ducks, which fortunately had not changed their position. As the smoke of the three guns cleared away, it disclosed to the gaze of the happy hunters nearly twenty dead and wounded ducks.

Gardner has stalked and decoyed many a flock of ducks since that eventful morning, and made many a successful shot ;—but never, we are assured, has he experienced more pleasure than on the morning of that first memorable duck hunt, when, in proud possession of his first gun, he participated in making a most successful shot, and learned one of the most valuable lessons in sportsmanship,—one that ought to be vigorously impressed on the minds of all youthful gunners, as well as those of more mature age and experience,—never, under any conditions whatever, to allow a loaded gun to endanger the life of a companion.

As Gardner finished his story, which had been closely listened to throughout, we noticed that it was beginning to grow chilly, and as the fire was getting low and our cigars had burned out, we consulted our watches, and finding it nearly twelve o'clock concluded it was about bedtime ; so, extinguishing the fire and light, we sought our rude but comfortable bunks, and proposed to woo the drowsy god, as we had to turn out early in the morning.

Although we tried our best, sleep fled from our eye-

lids, so unaccustomed were we to the strangeness of our surroundings; and finally we gave up in despair all hopes of obtaining sleep that night, and lay awake chatting and telling stories.

The wind continued to blow, and seemingly showed no signs of abating, which disturbed us considerably, as from the quarter it was now blowing, it would deprive us of a lee shore, which is indispensable to the decoying of ducks in rough weather. We knew if the wind did not abate by four o'clock our chances for a shot would be greatly diminished; but we hoped for the best, and while the wind roared and shook the frail shanty, causing our rude bed to rock and sway, we lay and listened to the mournful soughing among the pine tree-tops, which ever and anon would sweep across our roof, producing a sound such as we might fancy would be the result if the entire roof was being stripped off. As the violence of each succeeding gust passed away, we could hear during the lull that followed, the lisping music of the waves as they rolled in upon the shore but a short distance from us.

Finally, as the night wore away, the violence of the wind abated and it grew colder.

By that time the little alarm clock at our side rung out its warning note, telling us that it was time to be stirring if we wanted any ducks, and we were not slow to obey the call. Hastily dressing, we soon had a good fire going and the coffee-pot merrily singing on the stove.

CHAPTER IV.

A CUP of hot coffee helped to impart a grateful warmth to our bodies, and then carefully extinguishing the light, with guns in hand we stole quietly out into the open air. We found the weather to be clearing rapidly, the moon already shining plainly from out the fleecy patches of gray clouds scudding before the wind. The stars directly over-head were twinkling merrily, although those down near the horizon's verge were beginning to grow faint as the dull red lines stretching along the eastern sky heralded the approach of day. Once fairly outside the shanty and away from the protecting lee afforded by the pine woods, we began to realize that it was really cold. As we reached the stand and confronted the keen north wind sweeping down the lake, our teeth commenced to chatter and we had to resort to violent exercise to get warm.

The surf was pounding angrily on the shore as we put out the decoys, the spray breaking so high in air that we had serious misgivings as to whether ducks would alight there or not, and as to whether we could soon attract their attention with the decoys. As a *dernier ressort* we placed two decoys in the cove on the back side and to the leeward of

the island, hoping in this way to be able to stop some passing flock in the smoother waters of the cove, and then by a judicious throwing of decoy ducks from the stand, contrive to entice them to swim within gunshot. We had no sooner completed this task and hastened to the stand snugly ensconcing ourselves in the warmest corner we could find, than the wisdom of the move became apparent ; for, with no other warning than a flutter of wings, a bunch of fine black ducks flew over our heads, having passed directly over the decoys in front of the stand without stopping, and sweeping into the bend caught sight of the two decoys stationed in the rear of the island ; they quacked lustily at the new comers, and after making a few circles the entire bunch set their wings and dropped down to the decoys.

It was as yet quite dark on that side of the island, and we hesitated before risking a shot, as in the rough water they presented a small mark, and besides they were so mixed up that it was next to impossible to tell the wild ducks from the tame ones. As we did not wish to kill or wound the decoys, we held our fire for a few moments, hoping the moon, which was hidden behind a cloud would show itself long enough to enable us to make the shot with some degree of certainty ; and in this we were not dissatisfied, for in a few moments the clouds broke away and the moon shone out with its accustomed autumnal brilliancy, throwing a silvery sheen of light upon the very spot where the ducks were quietly floating and swimming about in short circles, the tame ones issuing from time to time low notes of welcome that seemed to keep their wild visitors contented and

from flying away. We watched our opportunity, and as they swam leisurely about they suddenly became separated from the decoys, and drawing together presented a fine shot. We threw our guns quickly to our shoulders, and as the full moon threw its rays along the polished barrels glistening with frost, we fired together and had the good luck of stopping them all. Gardner had the boat ready in a moment and quickly retrieved the birds, only one of which required the services of the second barrel in order to be a dead duck.

The wind having now somewhat abated we turned our attention to the front part of the stand, and with the aid of the glass could make out several flocks in the vicinity of Annable's Point, and soon one flock, more confiding than the others, swam boldly in and paid dearly for their temerity in the sadly decimated numbers with which they retreated before the deadly fire of the concealed breech-loaders; and circling high in air, the remainder of the flock started for the more congenial climate of the south. As they passed directly over our heads we could not forbear giving them a parting shot, though they were obviously out of reach; and while we could not prevail upon them to stop with us in answer to our leaden salute, we did at least contribute to accelerating their speed towards the rice swamps of South Carolina.

Things quieted down now for a half-hour or so, and then the ball opened again, we leading off with a pair which we neatly dropped just as they were fluttering over the decoys and about to alight; while the guns at Stony

Point, which so far this morning had not been heard from, now began to bellow and roar death and destruction to everything that came along in the shape of a duck.

It always used to do us good to see them shoot at Stony Point—almost as much as it did to get the shot ourselves. We did not claim the honor of being acquainted with any of the gentlemen who composed the Rockland Club, and who controlled and camped on this lonely point for many years ; but whoever they were they had the science of duck-shooting down fine, and shot with an abandon and skill, as well as almost military precision, that was charming to behold, and assured for them a lasting place in that great duck-shooting fraternity who are born, not made.

Annable Point is also alive to what is going on, as flash after flash, succeeded by roar on roar, testifies ; and we will guarantee the Brockton boys are having their share of the fun, for the wind is in their favor and the ducks always did have a tender regard for Annable's. We get another pair, and then the shooting stops, and is over as quickly as it commenced ; and after thrashing our fingers awhile in order to thaw them out,—for the dashing spray is cold as ice.—we take in the decoys, and getting inside the shanty have a fire started in less time than it takes to tell it, and as soon as the coffee is hot make an onslaught upon the provisions that threatens to cut short the camping trip by several days, unless our appetites meet with a sudden change before the week is out.

While we were eating breakfast we were joined by Gardner's eldest son, Will, who spent the day with us. In

the afternoon we took the boat and dog and went over to Quauk Island, in the hope of starting a fox or rabbit; but in this we did not succeed, and coming back to camp about four o'clock, where we had left Gardner, found that he had gone up to the village, leaving the camp to us. We put out the decoys, and just at dusk shot a pair of gray ducks—which are something of a rarity on the Cape, and are highly prized. About six o'clock Will started for home, leaving us in sole possession. Just as we were beginning to wonder what was keeping Gardner so long we heard his footsteps along the shore, and soon his welcome form appeared in the stand.

As we had taken in the decoys and fed them there remained nothing further to do. After standing for a few minutes and gazing out over the quiet surface of the lake, which was now beginning to reflect from its glassy depths the stars, as one by one they took their places high up in the ethereal blue, we reluctantly turned away from the charming scene and sought the shanty, where we soon had a substantial repast ready to which having done full justice we sat for several hours smoking and telling stories, and then feeling sleepy—for we had been exposed to the sun and wind all day—we rolled ourselves in our blankets and slept soundly till four o'clock the next morning.

We were awakened by Gardner promptly at four o'clock, and tumbling out of the blankets found our friend busily engaged in preparing coffee. On going outside we found the weather mild and pleasant, with the promise of a beautiful day. We lost no time in completing our toilet

and getting a cup of steaming coffee, and then to the stand, where we found everything as we had left it the night before.

Hastily putting the fetters on the ducks, we soon had them consigned to their native element, where they alighted with many a splash and quack, which were immediately answered by the decoys at Annable's and Stony Point, showing that our neighbors across the way had been earlier risers than we; and in fact we had fancied that we could hear their decoys when we had first stepped out-doors.

The morning being clear, daylight came on rapidly, and we could soon see with the aid of the glass everything that was going on on our side of the lake. We could see an occasional flash from the guns at the farther end of the lake, but it was not yet light enough to tell at that distance what the amount of damage was, if any. A pair of blue-wing teal flew past the decoys at a rate of speed that resembled a flash of light more than anything else; but quick as was the motion, it did not pass unobserved or unchallenged, for Gardner's Bonehill was already at his shoulder, and a charge of number five shot brought to a sudden termination the career of the foremost bird, the rear bird being well out of harm's way by the time the second barrel could be turned upon him, though the Bonehill did its best to get there on time.

So the morning wore on, the shots being pretty evenly divided, as near as we could judge, between the three stands. As the sun rose in a perfect sea of golden splendor, awakening the quiet surface of the water to new life

and sending tremulous waves of light hither and thither, the rich colorings of the birches, maples and sumacs on Long Point took on an added beauty; the perch and pickerel with which these waters teem rose to the surface as though eager to bask in the warm sunlight, whose soft rays were now being thrown directly upon us dispelling the chill mists that hung low about the borders of the lake, and imparting a genial warmth to us, who had stood for long hours exposed to the crisp, cutting October air. For this we were all profoundly grateful, even to our faithful retriever, "Santa," who winked and blinked his satisfaction and stretched himself lazily and prepared to take another nap. We had seen no birds for nearly an hour, and as it was getting a little monotonous, Gardner concluded he would go into the shanty and indulge in a quiet smoke.

He had been gone but a few minutes, however, when we saw swinging into the beautiful expanse of water on our left, known as Elisha's Bend a flock of ducks which must have numbered nearly one hundred birds. Quickly picking up a decoy and throwing it high in the air, we had the satisfaction of seeing the flock turn in our direction, as it shot towards the water; and as the second decoy struck the water the entire flock set their wings and alighted about two hundred yards distant from us.

It was but the work of a moment to run back to the shanty and notify Andrew, who immediately appeared, bringing with him the famous long gun with which his father had been wont to exterminate whole flocks of ducks, and putting it in a convenient place in the stand he pre-

pared to receive the birds with all the attention due them.

It soon became evident that the entire flock could not be decoyed, and it was doubtful for a while whether any portion of it would really come to the decoys ; but after much swimming about and apparently debating amongst themselves as to the best course to pursue, about twenty of the birds left the flock and swam rapidly towards us. As the ducks reached the decoys and the probability of securing a good shot became a certainty, our excitement knew no bounds, and we were in great danger of becoming "rattled" at the prospect of having so large a bunch of ducks within the range of our guns. Had we remained a trifle more cool we should probably have had a better account to give of our stewardship than that which we are now required truthfully to render.

As the birds came within easy range and together, Andrew, who was master of ceremonies, hastily mapped out the plan of action, which was, that we should fire together at his word, he to use the long single-barreled, muzzle-loader of prehistoric fame, which carried about one-fourth of a pound of shot and Lord knows how much powder, and which under all circumstances could be relied upon to kick worse than an army mule, and then to use the double-barrelled Bonehill when the birds rose. In that way Andrew argued we could kill nearly the whole of them. We took our respective positions with wildly beating hearts as we glanced along the shining tubes, out through the narrow aperture, at the dark shining mass of black, blue and green plumage which marked the spot where the ducks

were listlessly bobbing up and down, all unconscious of the danger that lurked in such close proximity; and as Andrew gave the word—"One, two, three, fire!"—the slumbering echoes of the forest awoke as if by magic, in response to the crash and roar which followed the discharge of our guns.

We saw through the smoke the form of Andrew as he reeled back, in obedience to a great law of nature, from the powerful back-action combination of the antiquated arm whose reverberating roar was even now dying away among the recesses of the distant hills, and then, looking over the top of the stand, caught sight of a rapidly retreating flock of badly scared ducks. We looked eagerly down at the water to see what the effects of the shot had been, and were chagrined beyond measure to find that we had killed but five, after all our elaborate preparations and sanguine expectations. As we took in the situation at a glance, the truth flashed upon us that in our excitement and eagerness we had overshot while the birds were sitting on the water,—a mighty easy thing to do, by the way,—and the heavy recoil and dense smoke had retarded our movements in the use of the second barrel, so that whereas we ought to have killed a dozen birds, we had only five to show for our lack of judgment and skill.

As the flock swept away northward on their course, Andrew mournfully shook his head, saying, "You will never see such a shot again at Coleman's Island." The incident seemed to have a depressing effect on our spirits during the remainder of our stay in camp. But it is an ill wind that

blows nobody good, and as the flock, which now required the services of the glass to keep in sight, swept by Stony Point, they took a sudden sheer which brought them well in over the decoys, and presented a fine quartering shot, which the Stony Point boys were not slow to take advantage of, pouring in a deadly volley as they passed, dropping thirteen into the water, most of which they retrieved; but this did not surprise us in the least, the only wonder being that they did not kill them all, as this was only one of the many good shots we at different times had seen them make. Once they had killed fourteen out of eighteen Canada geese at the first discharge of their guns, and, as if that were not sufficient for once, reloaded and killed two out of the remaining four, before the frightened birds could get beyond range.

We did not get another shot at ducks that morning, and soon retired to the shanty. After partaking of a substantial breakfast, followed by a cigar, in the smoke of which passed away the keenest part of our disappointment, we were again ready for whatever fortune might have in store for us, and passed the remainder of the day in lounging about the camp, the day being marked by no incident worthy of mention.

That evening we agreed that the next day should be our last in camp, as we both felt that we could not spare a longer time from our business, much as we would like to do so, for we had had a pleasant time and were loth to give up the wild, free life of the woods and return to our arduous duties; but the inexorable laws of business demanded it,

so we were bound to accept the situation with as good grace as possible.

That night we retired to our rude couch and slept soundly until morning, when we were again at our post eagerly watching for the slightest indication of ducks ; but though we stood faithfully on the watch till the sun had mounted high in the heavens, no ducks came to reward our lonely vigil, and at nine o'clock we took in the decoys and prepared for breakfast. In the afternoon we enjoyed for an hour or so some excellent sport,—gull shooting,—and killed quite a number, darkness closing over the scene without our having scored a single shot at ducks for the entire day.

Our last night in camp was spent around the cheerful blaze of our little camp-stove, which furnished us both light and heat, with the aid of an old bullseye lantern. which had done some forty years' service on board a sailing packet, and was now vainly striving to rest on its well-earned laurels. It had been brought forth now, much against its inclination, and pressed into an unwilling service, to meet the exigencies of the occasion, and showed its evident disapprobation of the whole proceedings by indulging in a constant series of spiteful splutterings, which threatened every minute to effectually extinguish its pale and flickering light.

Long after our usual hour for retiring we sat by the fire, and over our cigars recalled the many incidents of bygone days,—some pathetic, some humorous, but all possessing a peculiar interest of their own, as viewed by the flickering

light, and when at last we rolled ourselves in our blankets, it was to live over again in our dreams the scenes and incidents of the past as they had been flashed upon the retina of our memory, under the magic influence of a dying camp-fire.

We were a little late in turning out the next morning, and when we emerged into the open air it was to find a cloudless morning, without a breath of air stirring. Indeed, so still was it that we could plainly hear the quacking of the decoys at Stony Point, and as we entered the stand and looked out on the lake, it was to behold a calm, glassy surface stretching away for many hundred yards to where a thin film of mist lay low on the water, obscuring the distant horizon from view. As the sun came peeping up over Long Point, the mists were suddenly dispelled, disclosing to our view a pair of black ducks, which had evidently been waiting for more light before attempting to make a closer acquaintance with our decoys; and now that it was light enough to enable them to satisfy their curiosity and neighborly instincts, they swam boldly in and were quickly gathered unto their fathers.

This was the only incident that served to enliven the scene for some time, and then our attention became attracted toward the erratic movements of a flock of ducks at the farther end of the lake; they were amusing themselves by flying first in one direction and then in another, but they strenuously resisted all attempts at decoying, though the veterans at Annable's and Stony Point made the most frantic efforts to bring them within reach of their

guns. Suddenly wheeling, the flock passed the stand at Annable's Point with a provoking nearness that tempted the gunners to rebuke such foolhardiness, and they accordingly gave them a salute of half a dozen guns, which only served to accelerate their speed in our direction. Crouching low in the stand, we watched their approach until they were directly over our heads, wheeling and circling so near that we could see their eyes and hear the rush of their wings as they swept past us; and then, having satisfied themselves that everything was all right, they dropped gently down to the decoys. We, springing to our feet, took them just as they were hovering over the decoys, killing three with the first barrel, and picking up two more with the second, as they rose in the air and winged their way towards the sunny south.

Retrieving our birds, we waited a half hour or so longer, hoping to secure another shot; but as no birds came and it was getting late, we decided to break camp and go up into the village. It took us but a very short time to put things in order and to pack up our camp "duffle" and stow it in the boat; and then pushing off, with Andrew at the oars, we crossed the cove and soon landed on the opposite shore.

We stood for some minutes on the bank, a feeling of sadness stealing over us because our trip was ended, for it had been a week of genuine pleasure throughout, unmarred by storms or other untoward events. The water never looked more lovely than now, slightly stirred by a gentle breeze, causing the sunlight to dance along the tiny, sparkling waves that lapped upon the shore with a musical sound resembling

laughter, while a whispering farewell was wafted to our ears from the stately pines, that for ages past have sung their solemn requiem on Coleman Island's lonely shore.

As we turned away and plunged into the leafy cover of the woods, we heard again the roar of the guns at Stony Point, telling us that one more flock of *Anus Obscura* had been wiped out from the fauna of North America.



CHAPTER V.

UPON awakening one beautiful Sabbath morning late in September, we were impressed with the idea that we needed a vacation, so we decided to hitch up and drive to Centreville, twenty miles distant, and see what opportunities for sport were there afforded. We accordingly started a little after eight o'clock, and, passing the villages of East Falmouth and Waquoit, were soon in Mashpee woods, and after an hour's drive reached Mashpee River, which flows many miles through a dense forest, well stocked with game, and which has furnished trout for such distinguished anglers as Daniel Webster and Grover Cleveland, as well as for many others of less note and eminence.

We found it very hot in the woods, the road being dusty and the sun beating down through the pine forest with a fierceness that forced us to travel slowly, for we intended driving back that evening, and we knew that time lost now would be well compensated for on the homeward drive. A half hour's travel, however, took us out of the woods and into the historic village of Cotuit, and passing the little hamlet of Marston's Mills, which is chiefly celebrated as being the summer home of that distinguished

writer and jurist, Henry A. Scudder, were soon approaching the beautiful village of Osterville, which is fast attaining celebrity as a fashionable watering place.

We were now once more within the immediate vicinity of Vineyard Sound, and as we drove into the village were met with a cooling breeze, fresh from old ocean, and passing through the village were soon in sight of the broad and beautiful waters of the sound. The ride from Osterville to Centreville is one of the most delightful to be found anywhere on Cape Cod, the broad waters of the sound being in sight all the way and in close proximity, being separated from the road by the beautiful Chequaquett River, which flows into Osterville Bay, thence joining the ocean.

Away to the northeast are seen the Craigville bluffs in Centreville, thickly dotted with picturesque cottages, and the summer home of the Christian Baptists, which society holds an annual campmeeting there each season.

Just beyond is Hyannisport and Squaw's Island Point ; and if the ride is taken in the evening, the twinkling lights of Bishop and Clerk's lightship are seen far out at sea. We rumble across the substantial bridge that here crosses an arm of the river separating the villages of Centreville and Osterville, and driving along the shady streets of this, one of the most quiet and romantic villages to be found anywhere along the south shore, soon arrive at the old homestead, cosily situated on the banks of the Chequaquett River, which at this point is heavily wooded down to the water's edge, abounding in picturesque curves, and fer-

tile, sloping meadows, and is in the direct line of flight of myriads of water fowl that during the months of autumn are constantly winging their way south.

A few inquiries brought out the information that the ducks were beginning to arrive at Wequaket Lake, and that the gunners were opening up the camps and getting in readiness for the fall campaign ; also that numerous flocks of white-wings and whistling coots had been flying down river, bound south, within the past few days,—a sure harbinger of autumn and of glorious days of sport. Before the day passed we had an opportunity to verify these reports, several flocks of black duck passing directly over the house on their way to the blue waters of the sound just beyond. This, of course, was sufficient to arouse our enthusiasm to the highest pitch, and as several of our cousins were stopping at the house, all of them fond of duck shooting, the conversation naturally turned to ducks, guns and other kindred subjects, and was prolonged well into the afternoon, when the door suddenly opened and in walked our old friend Capt. William Kelley, the man above all others that at this particular time we most desired to see ; and from him we learned that he was about to open up the camp of the Messrs. Marston at Stony Point, Wequaket Lake, and expected to have it in running order in a few days, and that, as he expected to be alone for a few weeks, he would be glad to have us come down and spend a week or two in camp with him.

This being exactly our idea of a vacation, we were not slow in accepting the invitation, and agreed to be on hand

early the following week. and after taking leave of our friend,—first promising to send down some wood decoys on the following day,—we had our team hitched up, as it was getting late in the afternoon and we had twenty miles to cover before reaching home. About five o'clock we started on our homeward drive. The return drive was made without incident, and we reached home early in the evening, and on the following day forwarded the decoys, which arrived safely and were soon performing their allotted task of deception, to the intense dismay of several black duck and other aquatic fowl, which, having allowed their curiosity to get the better of their judgment, suddenly found themselves within range of "Billy's" death-dealing tenguage, and usually paid dear for their temerity in the loss of many of their companions. Still they would not learn wisdom by experience, and the disasters of one day were usually followed by a similar experience the next.

The week passed away, in which we had ample time to arrange our business and prepare for our departure, and as the following Monday morning rolled around it found us prepared and equipped, and at the station awaiting the train that was to bear us Capewards, and which left us at West Barnstable in due time. The day was lovely and all that could be desired, and the ride across the Cape to the South Shore in the open stage a pleasant relief from the close cars, and we arrived at our old home by the riverside in time for dinner. which had been kept waiting for us and was now ready.

From the folks at the house we learned that Billy had

come up from the lake that morning in anticipation of our arrival, and would probably wish to get back to camp quite early in the afternoon, as the ducks had been coming in during the afternoon for several days past ; so after dinner we overhauled our kit and stored away in the capacious pockets of our gunning jackets such things as we should be most likely to need, and then shouldering our guns strolled in the direction of our friend's home, but a short distance away and on the road to the lake.

As we drew near the house we discovered Billy standing at the gate with gun under his arm and lunch box in hand, evidently awaiting us, and on coming up with him and returning his hearty greeting, found that he was all ready to start and only waiting for us to put in an appearance, as he was anxious to get back to camp as early in the afternoon as possible.

For several days past he had been getting shots at ducks late in the afternoon, and did not like to let any chances of that kind slip by. We accordingly started at once, accompanied by Billy's faithful retriever, that rejoiced in the the euphonious name of Tramp ; but he was a grand dog and faithful companion, greatly attached to his master, and, as the days went by and we became better acquainted, soon came to regard us too as old friends and to bestow on us a share of his confidence and affection. He accompanied us on all our tramps to and from the lake, and whether snugly ensconsed with us in the stand eagerly watching for ducks, or cruising with us along the reedy shores of the lake in search of cripples that might be

snugly stowed away in the thick grass, or in roaming in the woods on our numerous excursions inland after firewood, or in pursuit of partridges and squirrels, he seemed intuitively to know his part, and went straightway to perform it, with little urging from us.

The afternoon was warm and pleasant, and we sauntered leisurely along through the fields and woods past Long Pond, cosily nestled among the hills and pines, its quiet surface reflecting the rays of the afternoon sun. Along the dusty highway and on for a few rods, where we cross the county road, passing the old burying ground on the hillside where, after life's journey ended,

“The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep,”

and thence gaining the woods ; after a walk of about fifteen minutes we reached the lake shore where Billy has his boat moored, and, transferring our luggage to the boat, jumped in, the dog scrambling in over the bow just as we are in the act of pushing off, and with Billy at the oars, we speed away over the placid surface of the lovely lake, out by Coleman's Island, covered with its sombre growth of stalwart pines, whose tops, gently moved by the wind, send playful shadows along the water far out on either side.

As we pass the point of the island, the scene of our former exploits, we scan the shore closely for some sign of life, but observe none, all being quiet and deserted, Gardner not yet having got into camp. Leaving the island behind us, we make the opposite shore and run in under Long Point, from whence we shape our course for Stony Point, yet many rods away.

When about half the distance has been covered, we are suddenly attracted by the eager motion of the dog,—that from his point of vantage in the bow has been a keen observer of all that was transpiring,—and, looking in the direction indicated, see a large flock of white-wing coots coming down the lake at no great distance from the water, and evidently bound out over the beach. As they appear to be coming our way, we hastily slip a couple of shells into our guns in anticipation of a shot. They bear down upon us with lightning speed and a mighty rush and roar of wings, their glossy forms glistening in the sunlight, and though they pass us too wide for a successful shot, yet they look so tempting that Billy ceases rowing and steadying the boat with the oars, says, “Try ’em if you want to.” This we do, giving them both barrels, causing them to reel and stagger, but still they keep on, though we can hear the shot strike them, which proves that our aim was good. We gaze after them, hoping to see one drop out; but we are not “in it” this time, as the flock gradually rises high in air and is lost to view behind the forest-clad shores of Coleman’s Island, and Billy, bending again to the oars, remarks with one of his quiet laughs, “When you can hear the shot strike ’em, they are too far off.”

A few minutes later we are at Stony Point, and running in behind the island, the boat glides up upon the strand. Springing out, we pull her well up into the bushes that thickly line the shore, where she cannot thump against the rocks or be filled with water in case the wind should rise during the night and send the waves rolling and dash-

ing upon the beach. We also took care to leave her fully protected from the prying eyes of any ducks that might happen to pass in close proximity to the island, and then unloading the boat we carried everything up to the camp and stowed all away in the shanty.

On consulting our watches we found it to be four o'clock, and time the decoys were out ; so taking the guns and field glass, and accompanied by Tramp, we bent our steps in the direction of the "blind" at the end of the point, and a few minutes later were standing within the enclosed barricade of boards and branches of birch and pine trees, deftly interwoven, and placed so as to present from the outside a perfectly natural appearance.

Having got the decoys out and placed to our satisfaction, we were at liberty to turn our attention to the lovely landscape spread out before us. the view of the lake from Stony Point being grand and beautiful, commanding as it does a fine lookout in every direction. The lake is at its widest here, and with the aid of the glass we can plainly discern all that is transpiring at Bliss's Point on the opposite shore and away to the northwest, and can look into the blind at Annable's Point directly opposite. Coleman's Island, the scene of our former sport, clothed in its living mantle of green, stands out clear and well defined, the most prominent feature of the landscape to the south, while to the north Shoot Flying Hill, the most prominent landmark for miles around, looks benignly down upon the beautiful panorama nature here spreads out for her lovers.

The wind was east, and the air grew raw and chilly as

the afternoon wore on, with every appearance of a southerly wind before morning. Our eyes were gladdened with the first sight of ducks about four o'clock that afternoon, after an hour of patient watching and waiting. We were standing in the northeast corner of the "blind," looking towards the north, when there suddenly appeared upon the horizon a dark speck which, as it drew near, rapidly evolved itself into a flock of ducks. A whispered word to Billy brought him quickly to our side, when we watched together the flight of the on-coming birds. It soon became evident that they did not intend to stop, and in a few moments they passed us high in air, taking no notice of the decoys, who sent after them a ringing challenge, playing their part well. We gazed after them till they were but a tiny speck on the southern horizon, and were soon lost to view, and then settled down to wait until another flock should appear, and again arouse us from our sleepy reveries to plunge us into that wild enthusiasm always slumbering in the breast of the true devotee of the sport, and only needing to be awakened at the sight of the noble game which he pursues.

The shadows lengthen, the air grows chill and frosty, and no sign of ducks as yet. From the campfire of our neighbors across the way a thin film of blue smoke mounted lazily upwards, announcing that supper was in progress, and Billy, with a sweeping glance along the horizon and across the surface of the lake, turns toward us and says: "I guess you can kill all the ducks that come; if you can't, why, you can call me; I am going into the shanty to start a fire and

get our supper;" and with this remark he disappeared through the narrow aperture that opened into the path that led from the "blind" up to the camp, and was almost immediately followed by Tramp, whose canine instincts no doubt led him to believe that supper was not far off.

Darkness was now fast approaching, and it was with difficulty that we could distinguish objects at any great distance, even with the aid of the glass. We amused ourselves watching the movements of the decoys, and by occasionally bringing our guns to the shoulder and looking along the polished barrels in order to assure ourselves that the sights still showed plain. We had been somewhat cramped and stiff from our long vigil, and were on the point of going in search of our friend and the warm glow of the campfire, which we knew was now permeating the shanty, when our attention was suddenly attracted by a peculiar movement of the decoys, that for the last half-hour had been quietly sitting with heads under their wings, but were now swimming about in a lively manner and giving vent to certain low cooing notes that we had learned to recognize as a note of welcome which they were in the habit of extending to their wild brethren whenever any of them approached very near.

Instantly cocking our guns, we stepped to the front of the "blind," but at first could not see any signs of game. In a few moments, however, our eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, we descried through the fast-gathering gloom the outlines of a pair of wild ducks swimming noiselessly in to the decoys, and thinking it would be hardly

fair not to give Billy a chance at them, we stepped back with the intention of crawling up to the shanty and calling him, when he suddenly appeared at the entrance to the "blind," gun in hand. Cautioning him against making any noise, we directed him to a corner of the "blind" that afforded the best view of the ducks, and giving the word we fired together, killing the pair, which Tramp retrieved for us in good style.

It was now too dark to think of further shooting, the moon not having risen as yet, so Billy advised our going to the shanty and getting our supper, which was now ready, leaving the decoys where they were, as by eight o'clock it would be moonlight, and then we could try it again. As this idea impressed us favorably, especially that part of it which related to the supper, we lost no time in complying with so reasonable a request, and hastily picked up our guns and the ducks, which on investigation proved to be plump and fat and in fine order, they being young birds.

We followed Billy down the narrow path that led up to the shanty, interlaced with branches of birch and maple, and on opening the door were met by a flood of light and grateful warmth which quickly dispelled the chill to which our lonely watch had subjected us, and divesting ourselves of our heavy clothing, we at once fell to and proceeded to demolish the good things which were temptingly arrayed on the rude table; to the utter dismay of Tramp, looking on with consternation depicted in every lineament of his canine face, as if in wonderment as to what his chances were, and whether or no there would be anything left.

The cravings of the inner man satisfied, we arose from the table and cleared away the dishes, first providing generously for Tramp, and then producing our pipes, we each found seats to our liking, and were soon wrapped in clouds of fragrant smoke, while Tramp, having finished his supper, proceeded at once to search out the softest spot on the floor and was soon dozing contentedly by our side, dreaming no doubt of immense flocks of ducks, in the capture of which he was to have an honored share.



CHAPTER VI.

AN hour or two of social chat before the cheerful fire, and then our pipes having burned out, we consulted our watches and found it to be already nearly eight o'clock and time for the moon to be in a position to enable us to take our places in the "blind." A few minutes more and we were again encased in our heavy clothing, and then whistling up Tramp, who obeyed the call rather reluctantly, much preferring his cosy bed before the fire to the chill night air outside, after carefully extinguishing the light, stepped outside the shanty and softly closed the door.

Stepping from out the shadow of the shanty into the narrow path, and to where through an opening in the birch and maples the quiet expanse of water stretched away to the farther shore, we found the landscape bathed in the effulgence of the harvest moon, which now was at its full. Brushing aside the branches, wet and glistening with pearly dew, we entered the "blind" and received a noisy welcome from the decoys, who, aroused from their lethargy, set up a vociferous quacking as if in protest at being disturbed from their evening slumbers. Proceeding to the front of the stand we assured ourselves that the two decoys that had

been left tied when we went in to supper were in their proper places, and then having seen that the guns were in readiness for instant use. there was nothng further left for us to do but watch and wait.

The air was sharp, and frosty, and we soon found it necessary to be in motion to keep ourselves warm : all except Tramp, who, not entering very heartily into the proceedings, curled himself up in a ball on the duck box and went to sleep, leaving us to pace up and down the narrow confines of the "blind," anon stopping to peer intently through the leaves, now beginning to look white with their coating of frost, to note, if possible, the first sign of incoming birds. Once we fancied we could distinguish the taint quack, quack of a duck and hear the light splash as the bird alighted in the water ; but we were not successful in bringing him to the decoys. We waited an hour or two, till the chill night air cut into our very bones, yet we were not gladdened with the sight of ducks, though several flocks of whistling coots passed high in air, southward bound. We could not see them, but could distinctly hear the low musical sounds produced by their wings, as in rapid flight they swept onward towards the sunny south.

Once, just as we were on the point of leaving the "blind" for the more comfortable precincts of the campfire, a wild duck passed us with the speed of an arrow, his glossy form and graceful outlines showing plain and distinct for the brief moment in which he was passing our narrow range of vision, while in front the silvery rays of the goddess of night showed full upon his fleeting form. Quick as was his

flight, it did not pass unobserved, for the decoys had become aware of his presence before even the practiced eye of Billy had noted him, and sent forth upon the still night air a ringing challenge, which was, however, passed unheeded, for the bird never swerved from its course, but sped swiftly on, and was soon lost to view in the uncertain light. As we gazed after him, now vanished, we could not help applying to him those beautiful lines of Bryant :

‘Seek'st thou the flashing brink
 Of meady lake, or marge of river wide;
 Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
 On the chafed ocean side
 All day thy wings have fanned
 At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
 Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
 Though the dark night is near.’

Nature, ever lavish of her bounties to those who know her in her utmost solitudes, reveals herself in many ways and forms unknown to civilization and the towns. Upon the sportsman, and particularly the camper-out, does she most generously bestow her varied charms, and in the five successive seasons that we camped beside these magnificent waters, we had abundant opportunity of not only basking in her most gracious smiles, but also of encountering the several frowns, all of which, however are now but pleasant memories, so completely does time with kindly fingers efface from our outings the unpleasant and disagreeable things of life, leaving only the things joyous and beneficent to linger in our memories.

Some writer, we have forgotten who, has written of

this, and remarked upon the fact that in recalling the incidents of camp life in after years, those things that at the time of their occurrence seemed most burdensome and threw a temporary chill and gloom over the entire camp and its occupants, have through the lapse of years become entirely obliterated, or else remembered only to become the subject of jest and mirth, so thoroughly imbued is the true sportsman with the idea that all discomforts and inconveniences are but adjuncts rather than hinderances to the pursuit of his calling, and to be remembered only as incidents which served to add a zest and spice of adventure to the trip which otherwise might have become tame and commonplace. This being the case, it surely redounds greatly to the credit of camp life that it enables those who become a part of its wholesome and mystic influence to treasure up only that which can be looked back upon with the highest satisfaction, yielding as it does rich returns in all that goes to make up the best things of life.

Surely it was a grand, beautiful scene upon which we were now gazing, preparatory to taking in the decoys and seeking the warmth of the shanty. Though no ducks came to reward our patient vigil, yet there was a charm in the surroundings of that moonlit scene that kept us chained to the spot even though the chill of the keen October air penetrated to the very marrow of our bones. It was the calm that was to precede the storm, though one would have looked in vain for any sign of a gale or tempest in the limpid surface of the lake that reflected in all its beauty the moonbeams' mellow rays, or in the starlight overhead where

hardly a cloud could be traced in all that expanse of silvery space. It seemed as though

“All heaven and earth are still:

From the high host of stars to the lulled lake and mountain coast,
All is concentrated in a life intense.”

We linger till the chiming of a bell far off in the belfry of a village church warns us that if we are to be on hand at four o'clock the next morning it is time we were getting some needed rest, and then relieving the decoys from their now rather uncomfortable positions, we slowly wend our way back to the shanty, bootless of game, but having very pleasantly spent our first evening in camp. A fire is quickly started and a cup of coffee soon removes the chill to which our evening vigil has subjected us, and then seeking our comfortable blankets we are soon wrapped in the arms of Morpheus and for a few hours are oblivious to the outside world.

The little alarm clock at our side ringing out its clarion note as the hour points to four a. m. is the first sound that brings us to consciousness after a most refreshing night's rest. Rubbing open our eyes we find Billy in the act of striking a light, and heroically overcoming a desire to take a longer nap, we tumble out of our bunk and into the chill of the grey dawn, which as yet has hardly made its appearance. Leaving us to finish dressing, Billy, who is already enveloped in his great coat, proceeds at once to the “blind,” and more from intuitive reasoning than from sight, for it is a dark morning, manages to select the right decoys and get them securely fettered and in their

proper places at opposite corners of the stand ; and then as it will be too dark to think of shooting for at least a half-hour yet, joins us in the shanty, where after filling our pipes, we proceed to enjoy a smoke, as being the most philosophical way of killing time till the approaching God of day shall dispel the inky darkness sufficiently to allow us to see a hundred yards from the shore.

A half-hour thus spent and we knock the ashes from our pipes and extinguishing the dim light afforded by our single oil lamp, take our guns, and closely followed by Tramp, wend our way to the "blind" and are ready for business. The decoys are quacking well, which fact, coupled with that of our having a lee shore and the weather being every way favorable for ducks, it being a chill, raw northeaster without a very high wind, serves to raise our spirits to a buoyant pitch, as peering cautiously through the "blind" we await with joyous expectancy the anticipated shot. Even Tramp shares in the exhilaration, and wags his tail gleefully, looking up into our faces with intelligence depicted in every canine feature, his great brown eyes roving wistfully about in the direction of the lake and ears alert to catch the faintest sound. The very air means ducks and he knows it.

With the first grey streak of dawn there came the rustling of wings followed by a light splash directly in front of us, and Billy, quickly turning the glass towards the sound, utters a whispered word of caution, and calling me to his side hands us the glass, at the same time indicating with his hand the place where the ducks are. In a

moment we have the glass at a proper focus and have located the birds, which on close investigation prove to be a fair-sized bunch of black ducks, there being some ten or a dozen birds, as near as we can count them, an exceedingly hard thing to do in the imperfect light, as they are constantly changing position. We consult for a moment as to whether we shall try to attract their attention by throwing decoys or wait for them to swim in of their own accord, it being as yet hardly light enough to shoot to good advantage, when the birds suddenly decide the question for us by taking wing and after making one or two circles drop down to the decoys and within easy shooting distance. Throwing our guns quickly to our shoulders, each covering all the birds he can, we fire, together killing five, Billy having the good luck to secure a pair with the second barrel while they are in the air. This result, while not altogether satisfactory, is as well as we could expect under the circumstances, the branches of the overhanging trees with which the shore of the lake is lined, forming a very dark background from which to shoot early in the morning. Had it been light enough to have enabled us to watch the movements of the ducks more closely and to have found our sights more readily, doubtless we could have done better; but we were not disposed to be in a very critical mood with Tramp bringing in five dead ducks, though there always is a sort of mystery hanging about the birds that get away, and we are all of us prone to fall into moralizing about it and to explain just how it was done, and how easy it would have been to have killed them all if we had only done thus

and so. Of course this all happens after the birds have got away and not before the shot is made.

We remain in the "blind" till after nine o'clock, but do not secure another shot, though several flocks are sighted. The sun has now mounted high in the heavens, dispelling in a measure the wintry chill of the previous hours, though constant exercise is still needed to keep ourselves warm after having been exposed for five long hours to the morning air. Visions of sundry cups of hot steaming coffee, coupled with a substantial breakfast, also began to dawn upon us as being the one thing most needful to our comfort at this particular time, and as the ducks do not seem to be flying our way we soon leave the stand and seek the shelter of the camp and busy ourselves with the preparation of breakfast, which is soon served and partaken of with that relish that only comes of appetites whetted and sharpened by exercise in the open air in the pursuit of healthful and exhilarating sport. Breakfast being over we repair once more to the stand and let the decoys all go out for a bath; after which they are driven in to their snug quarters and fed, and as our stock of provisions is running low we decide to make a trip to the village for the purpose of replenishing them.

Locking up the camp we are soon afloat and making good headway as the light boat under the impetus given it by Billy's strong arms bowls merrily along over the dancing waves. When about half way across to the farther shore where we are to make our landing we discover some two hundred yards ahead of us, a duck swimming leisurely

along, now and then turning his head in our direction to see if we are coming his way, and on close examination Billy pronounces him to be a whistling coot, and from his actions evidently wounded.

As it will not take us much out of our course we resolve on trying to capture him, and seeing our gun is in readiness for instant use we take a position in the bow of the boat, and quieting the dog, who, now that the game is in sight is in a state of great perturbation. Billy commences his task of bearing down upon and to the windward of the wounded duck in order to compel him to give us a quartering shot if he attempts to fly ; but this wily denizen of the upper air has evidently seen that little trick tried before, and raising himself in the water to his full height he turns his head towards us in a defiant manner and with a tremendous flap of his powerful wings sends a shower of crystal spray dashing from his sleek and glossy coat, the huge drops of water flashing in the sunlight like myriad gems ; then settling himself low in the water till his form is entirely out of sight and nothing is visible above water but his head and long, out-stretched neck he quickly turns and swims away in the opposite direction with the speed of an arrow.

It takes Billy a minute or so to recover his stroke as the boat which has been making a pretty fair rate of speed shoots by the spot where but a moment before we had confidently expected to see the duck rise, and then pulling the boat about and heading her in the direction of the fleeing bird Billy paused for a moment to catch his breath

and wipe the perspiration from his face, for under the bright rays of the sun it was warm work, and then casting his eye out to where upon the bright rippling surface of the water the duck's head could just be discerned as with every motion of his feet and wings he rapidly lessened the distance between us and the boat he exclaimed, "Well, you don't deserve to be shot after playing such a scaly trick as that; but if you want to race we'll try you for a spell anyway," at the same time giving way to the oars with renewed vigor.

We had come to the conclusion by this time that the duck was wing-broken and could not fly, else he would not have trusted entirely to his powers of swimming and diving to effect his escape; but it was all the same to us. Our blood was up and we were going to have that duck or know the reason why. It was exhilarating sport this being propelled over the water at a speed that sent the foam and spray dashing out from under the boat's stern, leaving an iridescent wake far behind upon which the sun danced and shone. The gunners at the Annable's Point camp had observed our strange tactics and were now watching us with their glassess, occasionally sending across the water a shout of encouragement, and the fact that we were observed made us the more anxious to succeed and we never once took our eyes off that duck as under Billy's powerful strokes the boat bore rapidly down upon the quarry that now seeing it was a race for life was making a game fight for it.

As we came within shooting distance, Billy slackened

the speed of the boat somewhat and steadied her with the oars as much as possible, in order to allow us a fair shot. It was a small mark to shoot at from a rocking boat, as the bird could not be induced to expose anything but his head, but once in turning his head to get a better view of us he raised himself slightly from the water, and taking a quick aim we pulled the right barrel ; but he was evidently waiting for that, and with a motion like lightning dove at the flash and escaped unhurt. Waiting a moment, we saw him come to the surface but a few rods away, and immediately gave him the contents of the left barrel, which started a few feathers from his back but did not prevent him from again getting under water.

We waited some time for his appearance, and when we next caught sight of him it was at some distance from the boat. Slipping in fresh shells we were after him *instantly*, and coming within range gave him both barrels in quick succession which raised a cloud of water about him, and again the feathers flew, but so lightning-like were his movements that the shot did not strike him hard enough to kill him, as he would dive at the flash of the gun and be half under water before the shot reached him. We knew, however, that he must be badly hit, and we congratulated ourselves that on his next appearance we would make an easy conquest of him ; but for some reason he did not make his appearance in the customary time we had allotted to him, and though we swept the surface of the water in every direction looking for him, our search was unrewarded and we had about concluded that he was dead and at the

bottom of the lake entangled among the reeds, and had begun to slowly retrace our course towards the landing, when we suddenly espied him half way across the lake and in the direction of the camp. As we had already wasted nearly an hour in our fruitless endeavors to capture him, we decided to give him the go-by for the present, not caring to waste any more time ; so with a mental reservation that we would pay our respects to him later in the day, we leisurely proceeded on our way and were soon at the landing.

Pulling the boat high up out of the way of all harm, we took our guns and strolled away through the woods in the direction of the village, which was reached without the occurrence of any incident worthy of mention, we not being lucky enough to start any game larger than a red squirrel, which we passed contemptuously by, not heeding his saucy chattering, though Tramp. who had an innate fondness for squirrels, was disposed to pay him his respects and rushed frantically around, all the while barking furiously in his vain endeavors to effect his capture, till, tiring of the sport, he gave up the chase and joining us trotted along by our side till home was reached.

We enjoyed an excellent game dinner and at two o'clock commenced our return trip over the well-worn trail, each laden with all the provisions he could well carry. On reaching the lake we found the boat all right just as we had left it, and after stowing away our luggage in the most convenient place we could find, shoved off and were once more skimming over the dancing waves towards camp. When about half the distance had been covered, we began

to look about us to see if we could discover aught of our old acquaintance, the whistling coot, who had led us such a lively chase during the morning's trip, and we had not looked long before we discovered him dead ahead and swimming leisurely in the direction of Stony Point.

Taking our old position in the bow we slipped a couple of shells into the breech-loader determined to give him a shot if an opportunity presented. It soon became apparent that we were going to overtake him, as he was swimming slowly while we were making good time, and when about two-thirds of the way across, the duck suddenly dove and came up within about forty yards of the boat. Quickly sighting at his head, the only spot about him that offered a shot, we fired the right barrel, and as the smoke cleared away saw the duck lying upon his back, stone dead.

"A good shot," said Billy, as the boat glided up to the place where he lay, and reaching over the side we picked him up and deposited him in the bottom of the boat. A few minutes more and the bow grated on the pebbles, and once more we were making our camp as evening fell.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCEALING the boat among the bushes that lined the shore, we carried our provisions and other belongings up to camp and deposited them in the shanty, Billy remarking, as he cast his eye critically over the provisions, that "He guessed we could stand it now for a spell," to which we laughingly replied that "We would be out again in thirty-six hours if our appetite continued to improve."

As the weather now began to look threatening, we brought in all the wood that we had on hand, and having completed this task, sat down to have a quiet smoke, which pleasurable duty over we proceeded to the "blind," there still being an hour of daylight left in which to indulge in our favorite sport. A brisk wind was sweeping up the lake and the wind moaned dismally through the tasselled branches of the pines and birches as we took our accustomed places behind the barricade that intervened between us and the prying eyes of any feathered game that might chance to pass our way. A faint wreath of smoke indicated the spot where, snugly ensconced within their comfortable camp, the Annable's Point boys were busily engaged preparing supper; and once in a while we could faintly dis-

tinguish the quacking of their decoys, though the water was fast becoming too rough to make them discernible, even with the glass, in the fast-gathering gloom that was settling down over the landscape, following the shore along as far down as Bliss's Point where our friend Bearse was encamped.

Billy thought he could see ducks in the water just off the end of the point, and even as he was commenting upon it we saw the flash, and a moment later heard the reverberating roar of several guns, and, holding the glass on the point for a few seconds, saw a boat put out from shore to retrieve the dead and wounded, of which there seemed to be four or five, as near as we could we judge. We watched the boat till it put back to the shore and disappeared among the shadows, and Billy had just remarked upon the advisability of taking in the decoys when we were startled by a sudden whistling of wings from behind, and looking up saw a pair of ducks in the act of swooping down to our decoys. It was quick work, on the part of the ducks, and on ours. A sudden tumultuous rush of whistling wings, as with eager, outstretched necks the graceful waterfowl alighted to the decoys, the quick aim and blinding flash, and roar of the guns, and the game was ours. Looking around for Tramp, and not seeing him anywhere, we suddenly remembered that we had left him asleep on the floor in the shanty; so running up to camp we opened the door and was met by his intelligent face looking inquisitively up, seeming to say, "Do you want me?". Patting him on the head, we said, "Come, Tramp, we have got a pair of ducks out here; go get them," and with a bound he sprang past

us in his eager haste, and in a trice was in the water, swimming bravely out to where lay the ducks, and soon had them both safely ashore.

We shot no more ducks that night, for it was now nearly dark, and the air was becoming unusually chilly ; so taking in the decoys and picking up our ducks, we wended our way to our cosy camp, and starting a fire soon had the coffee pot merrily singing upon the stove, while we busied ourselves with preparing supper ; and in the course of half an hour, having got thoroughly warm and rested, sat down to a substantial repast, and partook of it as only hungry men in the woods know how.

We usually fared pretty well in camp, especially just after having returned from a trip to the village ; for the women folks at the house always insisted on loading us down with the choicest as well as the most substantial of the products of the culinary art, and the meal to which we were now doing justice would have graced the *menu* of any fashionable city hotel. First, there was cold roast duck, done to a turn, with all its necessary adjuncts of dressing, gravy, etc., flanked by a generous dish of ruddy cranberry sauce ; then there were generous slices of corned beef, with slices of new-made bread and fresh creamery butter, followed by mince and apple pies, and grapes and apples, fresh-plucked from the orchards, in profusion—surely not a bad fare for a camper-out. For a long time we discussed the good things so bountifully prepared for us, not forgetting Tramp, to whom the evening meal was always a gala event ; and then clearing away the things and tidying up the camp,

we found solace in the inevitable pipes, and for an hour or so were lost in clouds of fragrant smoke. As our pipes burned low Billy fell into a communicative mood, and proceeded to relate to us many incidents connected with his past life, bearing upon the subject of fishing and shooting, to all of which we paid eager attention ; for Billy is a master hand at relating anecdotes of this kind, and his great experience in these matters, covering as it does a period of forty years, together with his innate modesty and characteristic simplicity of utterance, with no disposition to overdraw or exaggerate as he might easily do, so great has been his field of observation, seem to make the recital of his adventures while in pursuit of fish or fowl of surpassing interest to those, who, like the writer, are born of ‘hunters’ breed and blood’ ; and fortunate indeed did we consider ourselves when we could induce our friend to relate to us some of his varied experiences by “field and flood”. There are but few varieties of game but that have at one time or another fallen to Billy’s gun, and but few varieties of the finny tribe that have escaped from his seductive lures ; and whether his recital was of quail shooting, or deer and bear hunting among the swamps of South Carolina, and duck shooting among the numerous rice fields that abound in that sunny clime, or in pursuit of the gamy and toothsome shad in their annual “run” up the broad rivers and sounds of that favored land, or whether at home upon the beach when the south wind brought myriads of wild fowl from the rough waters of Barnstable Bay to the broad expanse of the Atlantic, whose tides thundered upon the

strand with deafening roar in the good old days when the wild fowl shooting at Centreville was at its full height and glory, and when upon such a day as we have just described the continuous roar of guns could be heard in the village from dawn to sunset, where now, alas, but little shooting is to be had, owing, presumably, to the defacing of the natural scenery which in the olden days invited rather than repelled the flight of the birds; in those days the wild and picturesque bluffs which stretched along the eastern horizon were wooded with living forests of noble oaks and stately pines, at the base of which flowed the great expanse of Chequaquet River, and down this natural highway the birds would speed, flock succeeding flock in rapid succession, passing out over the beach within easy gunshot, and affording magnificent and exciting sport.

But the innovations of modern times have, in a great measure, changed all this, and where once stood a stately forest are now to be seen summer cottages, gaily decked out in all sorts of unharmonious colors of plebeian paint, supplemented by the most fanciful gewgaws and designs of gingerbread work, which to the lover of art in nature can, as he beholds them, appear but as the abomination of desolation and but a poor substitute for the dark, rich mantle of living green that once covered this romantic spot. No wonder that the birds have forsaken their former course of flight, avoiding it as a pestilence, either passing high in the air or choosing the darkness of night in which to make their passage.

Whether amid these scenes or by the lovely expanse

of water where we were now encamped, with trained decoys or retrieving spaniel, Billy was wont to make havoc among the black duck and blue bills, his stories always had a peculiar charm for us, coming as they did from the lips of a man, the best years of whose life had been spent amid the scenes he so graphically described, and bringing with them the odor of the wild woods, the lake and marsh and stream.

But of all the many "yarns" with which Billy in his gracious moods was wont to while away the hours around the campfire, there remains one so singular and out of commonplace that it has always retained a place in our memory, and for the pleasure it affords the writer, even as much as for the benefit of the reader, we now proceed to chronicle what we have pleased to term the "Strange Story of a Wild Goose." The wind howled dismally among the denuded branches of the birches, bringing with it the far-away sound of the mournful tides thundering upon the distant beach, and causing the one window, that served to illuminate our little cabin by day, to shake and rattle dubiously, as Billy, having arisen and replenished the fire and refilled his pipe, again seated himself, and after smoking on for a few moments in silence, commenced the following narrative:—

"It was a good many years ago. when game was more plentiful than it is now, that I took my gun one morning, late in the fall, and went down on the beach in the hope of getting a shot at something flying along the shore. Stowing myself away in the thick beach grass, I lay for an hour

or two, and failing to see anything worth shooting at and becoming somewhat numbed from inaction and exposure to the raw air, had about decided to give it up and return home, and had already started in that direction, when, having walked along as far as the wharf, I changed my mind and decided to walk out as far as the end of the pier and take a look out on the Sound.

“Reaching the end of the pier I found it much warmer and more comfortable than it had been on the beach, the warm rays of the sun shining directly down upon the plank-ing; while the fishermen’s houses seemed to break off the force of the wind.

“Selecting the warmest corner I could find I sat down and remained there several hours without seeing any sign of game more than an occasional seagull, too far away to think of shooting at, or a loon diving and swimming along at a safe distance from the shore. Again I came to the conclusion that I might as well go home, and was on the point of leaving, when far out over the water I descried a flock of birds coming directly towards me and well up in the air. They were flying slowly, and it did not take me long to make them out as a flock of Canada geese bound inland, probably in search of fresh water. They were a long way off, and it was some minutes before they were near enough to enable me to observe them closely, and then the military precision of their onward flight, together with the oft repeated and well-known cry of the leader, left no doubt as to their identity. It was a large flock flying close together, and they soon passed me high in the air in the di-

rection of the river. They were too high to shoot, so I let them go, hoping to mark them down at some point along the river, or in some of the numerous ponds that lay scattered at short intervals back in the forest. As they approached the river, however, they showed no signs of lowering their flight, and I was just coming to the conclusion that I should have to make a long pilgrimage if I was to get my Thanksgiving goose out of that flock, when suddenly I observed a confused fluttering among the flock, and then as they straightened away again on their course one of their number was seen to leave the flock and fall limp and apparently lifeless to the ground, while the remainder of the flock proceeded on their way unharmed.

“To say that I was surprised,” said Billy, as he paused to light his pipe, which in the narration of the story he had suffered to go out, “would be putting it mild.

“I had seen no one shoot, heard no report, nor observed the smoke from any gun; besides, the flock was clearly out of range. What was the matter with that goose? Taking my gun under my arm and forgetting all about the remainder of the flock, I at once started in the direction of the place where I had last seen the goose, having marked him down in a reed swamp some half a mile distant from where I was. My course had led me over the beach hills, across the marshes and through bogs, till finally I reached the open fields where the walking was good. I was now able to make much better time, and in a few minutes I reached the woods that bordered on the outskirts of the swamp where I had seen the bird fall.

“Crossing the narrow belt of timber, I plunged into the network of tangled grapevines and brakes of which the swamp was composed. with some misgivings as to the result, as I could hardly bring myself to believe that the goose had actually been killed, and if only wounded, which I reasoned was the far more plausible theory, it would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack to find him, so many were the chances of concealment; but floundering on through muck and mire, now wound up in a giant grapevine and extricating myself only to step into a boghole or be caught in a bunch of briars, whose sharp thorns protruded at every point, I at last reached a comparatively dry and open spot, and there, lying at the foot of a young pine, was the prize I sought.

Stepping up to him I perceived that he was alive, yet he made no effort to escape; and quickly producing from my pocket a stout cord I securely fettered him without his making the slightest resistance, he looking on all the while in a sort of dazed fashion. Finding a more desirable path than the one by which I had entered, I left the swamp, carrying my prize carefully. In vain I examined him with a view to finding upon his body some marks of violence or wounds of remote or recent date, but could find none, and reached home without having come to any conclusion whatever in regard to his strange behavior. I kept him alive for a few days, tied in the yard, the centre of observation for all the neighbors round about; and when on the advent of Thanksgiving day we prepared him for the national feast, he was found on being spiced to have no shot

marks upon him, and to be as fine and plump and fat a yearling goose as ever rewarded a happy hunter.

“I have but one theory to offer,” said Billy in conclusion, “and that is based on a tradition among old hunters of which I have heard my father speak, that geese in flying would sometimes crowd each other so that the beating of their powerful wings would detach a quill feather from the wing of some luckless companion, which would cause him to lose his balance and fall, and, overcome with pain and fright, would imagine himself much more seriously hurt than what he really was, and continue falling until he reached the ground, where he would become an easy prey to the hunter who happened to be near the spot at the time, the shock of the fall serving for the moment to make him apparently unconscious and oblivious of his surroundings, unless perchance his downward plunge should happen to land him in his native element, when he would soon revive and regaining the use of his faculties would again mount high in air, and later on rejoin the flock ; but whether this theory is correct or not, I am not prepared to say, never having had further opportunity of investigation.”

Thus ended one of the most remarkable incidents ever related to the writer, though we have heard many both before and since, and have had abundant opportunity of observing many strange incidents both afield and afloat. Perhaps some of our readers who have followed us thus far and who have enjoyed a wider and more extended field of observation, will find something in their own experience afield similar to that which is narrated here.

The storm, which had been long delayed, now came on rapidly and with an intensity that boded us no good for the morrow. Our fire was out and a damp chill was fast pervading the entire atmosphere of the room; besides, our pipes were finished and the hour was late. So, having fastened the one entrance to our forest camp,—as Billy facetiously remarked, to keep out the tramps, though it would have been an exceeding hard tramp for any tramp to have reached us in that storm,—we were soon rolled in our blankets and listening to the wind screaming and whistling through the branches above our heads and to the wild roar of the waters surrounding our camp, now lashed into fury by the violence of the wind, which ever and anon would scoop up whole volumes of the angry flood and dash them against the side of the shanty as if determined to break in upon us; but we were used to scenes like this, and instead of frightening us it only served to lull us into a dreamy repose, from which we did not awake till well along toward daylight; and, then, finding that the storm had in no way abated its violence, and that it would be the height of folly to attempt to decoy in such a storm as was now raging, we by common consent drew our blankets more closely about us and proceeded to enjoy a morning nap, the first one in which we had been privileged to indulge while in camp, as on all the preceding mornings we had been awake and stirring by four o'clock.

It was seven o'clock when we next awoke; and, surprised to find the hour so late, we lost no time in getting dressed and starting a fire. The wind had gone down some

during the past few hours, so we decided to venture out into the stand and see how things looked out there. We found the stand in fairly good condition, the wind having done it no particular damage except to shake off some of the driest of the leaves, a defect which could soon be remedied when the weather became sufficiently settled to allow us to work out of doors in comfort. The water was very rough, but we decided on putting out a couple of decoys, as the rain began to let up some and we were anxious for a shot. The minute they were anchored, however, it became evident that they could not be kept out a great while, as the waves broke over them savagely, causing them to tuck their heads under their wings and settle down in the water, utterly refusing to quack and evidently badly frightened.

Untoward as were the circumstances, however, we were destined not to be wholly without success, for a monster Indian goose, weighing, we should judge, at least ten pounds, came flying up the lake, and seeing our decoys and having a morbid curiosity to interview them closer, alighted about a hundred yards distant from us, and having satisfied himself that everything was all right, which was the greatest mistake he ever made in his life, swam in within easy gunshot, and never swam out again. This was the only game bagged and the only shot we had, for the wind now began to increase in force and the rain to come down in torrents; so, hastily taking in and housing the decoys and picking up our whilom goose, we gladly sought the shelter of the camp, somewhat wet and cold and a good deal hungry.

The grateful warmth of the fire, however, soon dis-

pelled the chill and dried the dampness from our steaming garments, while a substantial breakfast, with the pleasing adjunct of plenty of hot coffee, served to satisfy the cravings of the inner man, and after that there was nothing to do but wait for the storm to clear ; but as hour after hour passed on without any sign of its abating, the situation began to grow monotonous in the extreme.

We had no reading matter, and, besides, our stock of firewood was low, and we dared not exhaust it, not knowing how long the storm might last ; and though the camp was beginning to get damp and chilly, we knew that it was better to suffer some discomfort now than to be without fire at dinner time or at night ; for unless there should be a sudden change in the weather we should not be able to leave camp at all for the day.

We amused ourselves for awhile by watching the gulls that were swarming into the upper part of the lake, where a flock of several hundred soon congregated, breasting the large waves, apparently unconcerned at the roughness of the water. Tiring of this and with watching the breakers roll in upon the foam-flecked beach, we turned anxiously to the clock, noting the minutes as they dragged themselves slowly away, for Billy had prophesied that on the noontide the wind would probably go down.

Twelve o'clock came, but with it no abatement of the storm, the wind seeming to blow fiercer than ever and the rain to literally pour down in floods. We prepared our dinner without the aid of a fire, preferring to save our scant supply of fuel till evening. This necessitated our going

without coffee, but water was to be had in abundance, and we managed to get along very well on that.

Our frugal repast soon ended, we spent a social half-hour or so in smoking and chatting together and listening to the fierce gusts of wind that threatened every minute to strip the entire covering of branches from off our roof, which if carried into effect meant lots of hard work for us; for the only implement we possessed with which to put them back again or to cut new ones with was a small shingling hatchet, and dull at that, and, besides, the branches had already become so denuded of their foliage that we doubted much as to their being of any value by the time the storm was over. It was therefore in a not very aimable frame of mind that we listened to the howling and shrieking of the gale, which at one o'clock seemed to have taken a fresh hold, and bade fair to outdo all its previous efforts of the morning. As the monotony of the thing grew upon us we began to feel sleepy, and at two o'clock, the storm still raging as hard as ever, we turned in, hoping to secure an hour or two of sleep, and was immediately followed by Tramp, who curled himself up close beside us and was soon snoring contentedly. We lay awake some minutes listening to the battling of the elements and chaffing back and forth with Billy, who was still puffing away at his pipe, and then we too fell asleep.

We were awakened about three o'clock or a little after by Billy coming into the room wrapped in his big coat, who imparted the joyful intelligence that the weather was clearing, and that he had been out to the "blind" and

righted things up a little, and that the storm had not done any serious damage beyond what we could repair in an hour or two the next day ; also that he had seen what appeared to be a large flock of black ducks alight in the lake several hundred yards to the windward of the camp.

Taking the field glass, Billy again disappeared outside the shanty, returning a few minutes later with the information that the ducks could now be plainly seen, and that they were swimming in our direction. We decided at once to get into the "blind" and try our luck in putting out the decoys ; for if the wind kept on diminishing in force we should soon have a comparatively lee shore. We got out of the shanty as quietly as possible, and crept along the narrow path that led to the "blind" not daring to show our heads above the bushes that lined our way, as the ducks were now directly in range ; and reaching the "blind," fettered two of the decoys and managed to get them out into the water, and by throwing stones at them would get an occasional quack out of them, more from anger, we presume, than from any other cause. It was decoying under difficulties, but anything that had an element of sport or excitement in it was better than this enforced idleness of the past few hours, and we welcomed the change, whatever might be the result. By turning the field-glass upon the "blind" at Annable's Point, we could see that the waves were breaking clear over the top, thus barring out the gunners there from indulging in any shooting for the present. Bliss's Point and Coleman's Island were apparently deserted, and we were left sole possessors of the field, or

more properly speaking the flood. As the ducks swam slowly up the lake, every minute bringing them nearer our position, it soon became apparent that they had seen our decoys, and once the whole flock headed towards us and for a few moments swam steadily in our direction, causing our hopes to soar high in anticipation of the coveted shot. Then they suddenly became suspicious and turned off. We threw a couple of birds from the stand, hoping to allay their fears, which as soon as they struck the water, with great presence of mind deliberately swam ashore and crawled up in the bushes. This was rather more than we could submit to tamely, especially in view of the fact that a large flock of ducks was within two hundred yards of us, though we doubt not the provocation on the part of the birds in acting as they did was great; and we sent a shower of stones and invectives after them in a vain attempt to drive them back into the water; but what we could not accomplish, Tramp could, and taking in the situation at a glance, he darted past us out of the "blind" and along the shore into the bushes where the offending decoys lay concealed, and drove them perforce into their native element, where they remained, having caught sight of their wild brethren, and immediately began challenging them to a closer acquaintance.

The next few moments were passed between alternating hope and fears, as the ducks were now apparently holding a consultation as to whether they should interview us more closely or not. It was evident that they would not remain much longer where they were, as the water was too

rough. It was a critical moment, and we threw decoys at short intervals until the last one was out of the box. As the last bird touched the water a portion of the flock separated from their companions and flew straight in for the decoys and alighting some fifty yards distant, swam up to the windward side of the "blind," but finding the water too rough to draw in to the decoys from that side, allowed themselves to gradually drift to leeward, giving us a very fair quartering shot as they came in, considering the roughness of the water. There were about a dozen birds in the bunch, and our nerves were strung to the highest pitch of excitement and enthusiasm as simultaneously our guns rang out in one long, reverberating report. Through the smoke that wafted upward we caught a momentary glimpse of vanishing forms, and again the breech-loaders rang out their clarion notes, but failed to score, though as the smoke rolled away we found that we had stopped five at the first discharge, which was not so bad. Tramp retrieved the ducks for us, breasting the dashing waves in gallant style until he had laid the last of our trophies at our feet. We now turned our attention to the decoys, and got them all in and safely housed by exercising considerable patience with them, as the dashing of the spray on the beach tended to make them wild. This duty attended to we repaired to the shanty and consulted as to whether we should remain in camp over night or attempt to cross the lake in the boat.

We were not in the best of shape for spending a comfortable night in camp, owing to our scarcity of firewood

and the fact that the weather was clearing to the northwest and bade fair to be cold before morning ; besides our larder needed replenishing, and we knew the folks at home would be somewhat anxious about us. Billy was the sailor, so we deferred to his judgment in all matters concerning wind and weather ; and after carefully noting the aspect of the sky and water he finally decided that it was safe enough to make the passage, and that if we were going we ought to get an early start. Our preparations were soon made, and locking up the camp we went down to the shore to the spot where we had left the boat, and found her all right with the exception of being about half full of water from the effects of the rainstorm through which we had just passed. A vigorous use of the bailer served to lighten her to that extent where our combined efforts enabled us to tip her sufficiently to allow the rest of the water to escape, and then righting her we stowed away our luggage, and launching her, jumped in, with Billy at the oars, and were scudding away towards the distant shore before a fresh north-west breeze.

We found the water smoother than we had anticipated, and, guided and propelled by Billy's powerful strokes, the boat went along at a good rate of speed, and just as the sun was sinking behind the western hilltops we ran in under the lee of Coleman's Island, and a few minutes later reached the shore. Leaving the boat so that we should be sure to find it all right in the morning, we picked up our game, and shouldering our guns walked up to the village, where we found our friends anxiously awaiting our arrival.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE had agreed on separating, for the night that unless the weather should prove mild in the morning we would not make an early start back to camp but would wait until late in the forenoon which would give us time to take things easy on the return trip and still get into camp in time for the afternoon flight of ducks, if indeed we were fortunate enough to get a flight, the wind having blown from the east so long and with such violence that Billy was not very sanguine as to our chances being very good for getting any good shooting for at least a day or two, as any flight of ducks caught in the wake of the storm would very likely have gone by, and in such a case we might have to wait days before having any luck at all. It was therefore with not very buoyant feelings that we awoke next morning to the sound of rain beating against the windows, accompanied by the same boisterous wind that had greeted our ears for so many hours. It was the same old northeaster, having abated a little of its fury the preceding evening only to take a fresh hold in the morning. Our acquaintance with this kind of weather along the Cape Cod coast told us that we would not look for any propitious time in which to

cross the lake unless it be late in the afternoon or evening, and then the chances were against us, owing to the heavy sea which would be undoubtedly running, making it exceedingly risky for two men to attempt to make the passage in a small boat. We therefore endeavored to take a philosophical view of the situation and attempt to get some sleep of which we rather stood in need at this time. Sleeping, however, soon becomes monotonous to one who has only a short vacation and is bent on shooting ducks, and so we found it, and after a late breakfast we looked about us for some more active pursuit with which to engage the time until the storm should have spent its force, but the field of operations was limited in the extreme and we were fain to remain indoors and chafe impatiently at the delay and berate our illfortune. What made it more exasperating, was the fact that our time was limited to a few days, and had everything worked favorably during the previous days we should now have been ready to go home, as it was we were dissatisfied and not ready to give it up without making a good bag of ducks. Several times during the day we were on the point of packing up and taking the train for home, as the storm seemed rather to increase in violence instead of abating; but we finally compromised the affair by telegraphing regarding the advisability of staying a few days longer, and getting a favorable reply our spirits rose somewhat.

The boys being better provided with waterproof clothing than we, started out towards noon on a turtle hunt in the neighboring swamps, and returned later in the day

pretty thoroughly wet and bedraggled. having had lots of fun, and bringing with them one large turtle as a trophy. The turtle furnished us with some amusement by his ungainly movements and sulky disposition, showing a disposition to snap at and devour everything that came within his reach. He was off his native heath and seemed instinctively to know that he was surrounded by enemies. We did not care to cultivate his acquaintance too closely as he was an ugly looking chap, though invited by the boys to lift him up by the tail and put our fingers in his mouth, and do sundry other things boys delight to see someone else do. There is an old saying among turtle hunters that if you put your finger in one's mouth the turtle will not let go until it thunders; as this was not just the season for thunder showers we concluded to give the turtle the benefit of the doubt, fearing that we should have to wait too long before arriving at a satisfactory conclusion; if, however, any of our readers desire to make the test they can no doubt find opportunities in which to satisfy their curiosity.

The first signs of clearing weather came about three o'clock, and in the course of another hour the sun was shining and the last of the storm clouds were scudding away before a fresh northwest breeze. Starting across the fields to Billy's house we found him making active preparations for a start back to camp early in the evening, so hastening home again we partook of an early supper, and having supplied ourselves with provisions enough to last us for two or three days, again started campward, picking up Billy and his faithful dog Tramp on the way. We reached

the shore of the lake just as the moon was shedding a mellow radiance over lake and wood, and causing the dew-drops on the maples and birches that lined the shore, to glisten like gems of the purest water. We stopped a few moments to enjoy the quiet scene spread out before us and to rest ourselves somewhat from our long tramp, and then gathering a good supply of firewood, with which the shore was plentifully sprinkled, we placed our belongings in the light skiff and with Billy at the oars pushed out from shore and shaped our course for Stony Point. The lake was smooth, hardly a ripple to mar its surface, all trace of the storm, which but a few hours before had swept its surface with such violence, having entirely disappeared, so that under the impetus of Billy's powerful strokes we soon made the opposite shore, and running well in under the overhanging mantle of green, skirted the shore along for several rods, until the white silvery beach of Stony Point loomed up ghostly in the moonlight before us, when a quick turn of the paddle sent the light boat to land. It was but the work of a few minutes to unload and carry up to the shanty our light cargo, and then hastily concealing the boat we hastened inside the camp and had a roaring fire going, over which we brewed steaming cups of savory coffee, which served to dissipate the chill and frost which somehow had crept into our bones during our moonlight trip across the lake. After that a social pipe and then the inevitable story telling with which our friend always regaled us, and which we looked forward to as the one most agreeable and fitting finale to the day's doings, and not least among the pleasant

remembrances of our life at Stony Point are the evening hours before the campfire, when reclining in the cosiest corner of the camp, with Tramp stretched out by our side, we watched the flickering firelight cast its grotesque and fantastic shadows along the wall, throwing an occasional fitful gleam upon Billy's weather-beaten face, as pipe in mouth and snugly ensconced in his favorite chair before the fire. he related to us his marvelous tales of field and flood. That evening we had an interruption in the way of visitors from a neighboring camp, and had scarcely settled down to our evening pipes when we heard the dip of paddles and a moment later the sound of a boat's keel grating on the pebbly shore. Springing to our feet and throwing open the shanty door we greeted the newcomers with a hearty welcome, receiving from them in turn a ringing shout, as having drawn their boat well up out of the reach of the waves, they made their way towards us. As they stepped from out the darkness of the forest into the narrow circle of light thrown out by our solitary lantern, we found one of the two men to be an old acquaintance, Mr. George Bearse, and the other a hunting companion of his, who for the time being were occupying the camp at Bliss's Point, nearly opposite the spot where we were encamped. Our invitation to come inside and share the hospitality which our camp afforded was warmly accepted, and having thrown on more fuel and refilled the pipes all around, the remainder of the evening was passed in social chat, the conversation naturally turning to ducks and duck shooting, a subject upon which every member present could

say something of interest to the others, so varied had been our several experiences, Billy throwing in at the last moment, by way of variety, a thrilling account of a bear hunt in the Carolina swamps. The time having arrived when our friends must depart we accompanied them to the shore and bidding them good night watched them until their boat became but a speck in the darkness and the dip of the receding paddles were but faintly borne to our ears, then retracing our steps to camp made all snug and safe for the night preparatory to turning into our cosy bunks. Billy, whose sense of humor never left him, whether wet or dry, cold or hungry, always attended to this duty with great punctiliousness, seeing to it personally that the door and windows were strongly barricaded before retiring for the night, in order to keep out tramps, as he was wont to facetiously remark, though to our mind it was extremely doubtful if any of these nondescript gentlemen had ever paid a visit to Stony Point. Finally, every detail attended to, we wrapped ourselves in our blankets and lay down to sleep, trusting to the little alarm clock to wake us at four in the morning. Billy was usually the first one to awaken, he, like all sailors, sleeping with one eye open, and it was the noise occasioned by his bustling around the camp that brought us out of a peaceful slumber shortly after the appointed hour. Hastily donning our heavy clothing we joined Billy in the main room of the camp, which served alike as kitchen, dining and general lounging room, and having lighted the oil stove soon had coffee hot, a cup of which was partaken of by both of us, and we were ready

once more to take our positions in the "blind," where we were noisily welcomed by our aquatic friends and allies, the decoys. We found the air decidedly chill and frosty, with a light breeze from the northwest blowing down the lake and from our corner of the "blind" we could watch the stars gleaming brightly through the interlacing branches of the maples and birches, turning each dewdrop into a sparkling gem, as with senses keenly alert we listened for the first sound of ducks. We were not kept long in waiting, for presently there was borne to our ears the faint flutter of wings followed by a light splash; and at the same moment the decoys set up a lively quacking, conveying to us the information that they, too, had noticed the new arrivals. It being not yet light enough to shoot with any degree of accuracy, we made no attempt at bringing them in closer, feeling assured that the decoys would hold them where they were until the light of the already advancing dawn should enable us to discover their exact position when, barring accident, it would be an easy matter to bring them near enough for a successful shot, consequently we set ourselves down to wait for the first stroke of daylight to appear, ever and anon peering through the port-holes from our respective corners in the "blind," each eager to be the first to discover the whereabouts of our feathered game and wondering if daylight would ever come. At last a low whisper from Billy's corner tells us that our friend has sighted the quarry, and creeping silently to his side and following the direction in which his finger points, we can just discover in the uncertain light a small dark object some seventy or

eighty yards distant upon the water which long experience tells us is a bunch of ducks. A few moments more, and so fast does the light increase that we are enabled by the help of the glass to make them out distinctly, and are gratified to learn that they are black ducks, five in number and that their attention is already turned towards our decoys, who from time to time issue forth a low, cooing sound, well calculated to dispel any lingering suspicion of danger that might possibly lurk in the breast of their wilder brethren. Creeping noiselessly back to our old position in the further corner of the "blind," from a convenient port-hole of which we can watch every movement of the birds, we somewhat impatiently await events. Will they swim in nearer or will they remain stationary, preferring a wide reach of open water to the possible dangers that may be hidden near the shore, or will some luckier sportsman in a neighboring camp, having brought his game well within range of his breech-loader and not knowing of our anticipations, or totally regardless of the same, fire the shot that shall send our birds scurrying away on rapid wings to be seen no more by us that day, or will some careless act on our part or untoward movement among the decoys serve to awaken a suspicion among the ducks, which once aroused we know full well will prevent our securing the coveted shot? These and other thoughts of a like nature flit rapidly through our brain as we crouch low in our narrow hiding place and anxiously await the next movements of the game. At length, after what seems to us an interminable length of time, but which in reality has been but a few minutes, the

birds, apparently thoroughly convinced of their safety and desiring to make a closer acquaintance with their brethren near the shore, commence to swim slowly in towards the decoys. A few minutes later and the required distance has been lessened and they are within range and directly beneath our guns. Slowly they draw together, presenting a fine shot and the supreme moment for us has arrived. Billy gives the signal, we take quick aim and fire together, and as the smoke clears away five glossy forms are stretched out upon the water as the result of our patience and skill. Tramp gleefully springs to the door of the "blind" anxious to perform his part, and striking boldly out retrieves them one after the other, his face wearing a proud look of satisfaction as he lays them at our feet. After duly inspecting the birds, which prove to be in fine condition, we again turn our attention to the business in hand, it by this time being light enough to enable us to see all over the lake. No ducks being in sight we improve the opportunity of indulging in a little exercise of which we stand in need after our enforced quietude of the past hour, and by the time the sun, rising like a globe of fire from behind the highest point of the eastern hills, throws its first rays athwart the dancing waves, we are well warmed up and are back in our old places with field-glass in hand, and once more eagerly scanning the surface of lake and sky for any sign of ducks, but we were not privileged to secure another shot at our favorite game on this particular morning, our only remaining shot being at a shelldrake, which Billy considerately allowed us to bag unaided, and under circumstances so pe-

culiar that we deem the narration of sufficient importance to be recorded here. The morning was well advanced when we first discovered him a mere speck on the water, and so far distant that the glass failed to reveal his true identity as he gradually worked his way down the lake, drifting before the wind. We made several attempts to attract his attention by the aid of the decoys, until having shown us plainly by his movements that he was not the game we were after, we gave him up as a bad job, but as events proved he was not to be shaken off so easily, and having been attracted towards our decoys he evinced an evident inclination to become better acquainted with them, and altering his course, with head erect and every sense alert, he bore rapidly down in our direction. The decoys, noting the approach of the stranger, set up a most vociferous quacking as if to frighten away the intruder, but instead of taking alarm he only swam the more boldly towards us, uttering a well simulated quack in response to each scornful cry of the decoys. As this was the first occasion on which we had ever heard a shelldrake quack, the whole procedure afforded us no little amusement, and in fact we have never heard one do so since, though we have gunned them successfully for a good many seasons, and believe the case to be one of rare occurrence ; neither, as a rule, will they come to live decoys other than their own species. The confiding nature of this particular bird, however, proved to be his ruin, as he was promptly gathered to his fathers, serving later on as the basis of an excellent duck stew.

The episode of the sheldrake thus disposed of and a careful scrutiny of the lake with the glass revealing no sign of ducks, we decided to take in the decoys and proceed to get our breakfast, it now being nine o'clock in the forenoon, and we as yet having had nothing more substantial than a cup of coffee. It was the work of but a few moments to feed and house the ducks, then repairing to the camp we soon had a fire started and shortly after sat down to an excellent breakfast. The wants of the inner man now satisfied and the remains of the breakfast cleared away. Billy proposed that we make an excursion to the neighboring shore in search of firewood and also to procure some branches of green stuff with which to repair the damage done to the outside of the camp and "blind" by the late storm. Accordingly about two hours before noon we set out, taking our guns along, and with Billy at the oars, though had we known that a worse gale than any we had as yet experienced was already on its way and would undo all our hard labor, it is doubtful if we should have left camp at all that day; but there we no signs of storm lurking in that bright, beautiful October air, and it was with light hearts, therefore, that we started on our voyage to the mainland. Skirting along the eastern shore of the lake we reached the entrance to Quauk Island Pond, and entering upon that beautiful expanse of water and closely hugging the shore soon reached the place where Billy said we were to stop, and turning the boats prow to land we ran in under an overhanging branch of a sturdy maple and making the boat secure picked up our guns and axes, and followed by

Tramp, stepped ashore and made our way into the forest. We did not have far to go before finding what we wished, and by making diligent use of our axes soon had a boat load of the desired material with which to patch up the exterior of the "blind" and also to furnish us with firewood for several days. It took us several trips to carry it all down to the shore and warm work it was too, as the October sun was hot at mid-day even here within the forest. It was done finally, however, after considerable puffing on our part, Billy having the good luck on the last trip to shoot a partridge. Sitting down on shore we rested a bit and then proceeded to load the boat, and having trimmed it nicely so there could be no danger of capsizing on the return voyage, we pushed out from shore shortly after noon and commenced our homeward trip. We found quite a strong wind blowing when we entered the lake, which caused our little craft to rock and sway about some, but under Billy's skilful pilotage we reached the camp safely without accident. Dinner was now the next thing in order, which we quickly prepared and disposed of, and then we at once set to work to repair the camp. This, it took us most of the afternoon to accomplish, and we had scarcely put the finishing touches to our work when a pair of black ducks flying by directly over us warned us that if we expected to take any part in the afternoon flight it was high time we were about it. Hatchets and saws were accordingly promptly put away and a few minutes later found us in the "blind," with decoys in position and but one object in view and that to kill a black duck. We watched the afternoon

fade into evening twilight and still no ducks came our way, though an occasional boom borne across the water from the direction of Coleman's Island, told us that our friend Gardner was having some luck. Twilight faded into darkness and one by one the stars began to make their appearance and yet we were loth to give it up. Finally Billy decided that it was useless to wait longer and was about to take in the decoys, when a sudden movement in their midst caused us to relinquish our purpose for the time being, and a moment later we had the satisfaction of seeing a pair of ducks swim noiselessly in to the decoys. Finding that we could not catch the sights on our gun owing to the fast gathering darkness, we whispered to Billy, who stood in a position better exposed to what little light yet remained, to shoot regardless of us, and a moment later the report of his gun rang out upon the evening air, awakening the echoes among the neighboring hills. The report of the gun was followed by a splashing in the water as of escaping birds, and quickly springing to the boat and taking Tramp with us we pulled rapidly to the spot as near as we could determine where we last heard the ducks. We pulled about for some minute before getting any track of our birds and then came suddenly upon them, they at once taking wing and giving us no chance for anything but a snap shot, which we took, sending the contents of both barrels of our breechloader after them. By this time the darkness was intense, and after pulling about for several minutes and listening intently for any sound that might help us to locate them we were obliged to give them up and return to camp

empty handed, Billy being of the opinion, however, that they were hard hit and that with the aid of Tramp he could find them in the morning somewhere about the shore. Getting the decoys housed for the night once more we proceeded to get supper, and being pretty well tired out after our day's toil, retired early.

We were awake early next morning and again doing sentry duty, but though we saw some ducks we failed to secure a shot, and about seven o'clock Billy announced his intention of leaving us alone in the "blind" while he, accompanied by Tramp, took the boat and crossed to the eastern shore to institute a search for the ducks we had crippled the evening before. Accompanying him as far as the spot where the boat lay moored, we watched him well across the lake and then returning to the "blind" took up our lonely watch. About half an hour passed when we heard the report of both barrels of Billy's gun in quick succession, and not long after the dip of oars announcèd the return of the hunter. Stepping out on the shore to meet him and peering into the bottom of the boat we were gratified to see lying there the dark, mottled forms of the ducks, which Billy had found as he had anticipated. skulking among the reeds which lined the eastern shore.

We now decided, as the weather was favorable, to make a trip to the village, we being somewhat anxious to receive letters which we expected were awaiting our arrival there, and Billy having some matters at home which needed his attention; our plan being to return in the evening for a final try at the ducks on the following day, that being the

last of our vacation. Our preparations were quickly made, and we were soon scudding along before a brisk northerly wind, which was destined to become a hurricane before the day was done. Gaining the opposite shore without incident we wended our way to the village, and taking leave of Billy at his house we agreed to call for him at six o'clock that evening, and going from thence to the post office we found the expected letters had arrived and having received them, together with copies of the morning papers, we passed the remainder of the day quietly in reading and in getting in touch again with the outside world. Shortly after noon the wind began to increase in violence accompanied by rain, and the prospect of getting back to camp looked dubious. By six o'clock, however, the hour agreed upon for starting, the rain had ceased, though the wind still blew a gale. We decided to start, though looking back now upon that night we cannot but feel that it was a foolhardy undertaking on our part, for which we were principally to blame, Billy no doubt deciding against his better judgment in order to give us one more chance for a shot. After floundering about in the woods for some time, part of the time in the path and at others out of it, for it was intensely dark, we at last came out upon the shore of the lake on the very spot where we had left our boat in the morning. Looking out upon the lake the prospect was anything but inviting, and Billy cast many an anxious eye to the windward before launching his frail craft. The waves were running high and breaking with an angry roar upon the beach, and it was only after repeated attempts

that we got away from the shore ; once afloat it was comparatively easy work until we reached the end of Coleman's Island, whose fir-clad shore loomed up before us a mighty bulwark between us and the fury of the waves. Once clear, however, of its protecting shore we felt the full violence of the gale and the little boat commenced to dance and rock, shipping water at nearly every stroke of the oars. To add to our discomfort the rain now commenced to pour in torrents, drenching us to the skin, still we kept bravely on, our only safety lying in keeping the boat out of the trough of the sea and working to the windward as fast as we were able. Many times it was impossible to tell whether or not we were making any progress, and had an oar blade snapped we probably should never have reached Stony Point ; but the trusty ash did its duty nobly and thanks to Billy's skill and coolness we finally ran in under the windward shore where the water was smoother, and catching hold of an overhanging branch we swung the boat into comparatively still water, where we rested our tired muscles for a few minutes and succeeded, by diligent use of the bailer, in freeing the boat of most of the water we had shipped in our voyage across the lake. Starting again and keeping well under the lee of the shore we made much better progress, and after awhile managed to sight through the darkness the outline of Stony Point, stretching out a protecting arm into the night, beckoning us to safety and shelter. Never did the grating of a boat's keel upon the sand give us such a thrill of pleasure as when a few minutes later our little bark reached the coveted shore, and springing

out we landed on terra firma. Dragging the boat well up on the shore we made our way at once to the shanty and attempted to start a fire; most of our firewood had been exposed to the rain and it was some time before we could coax a blaze, but finally we succeeded in doing so and divesting ourselves of the wettest of our clothing tried to dry it before the fire while we set about to prepare supper. Scarcely had we seated ourselves to our evening meal when Billy, chancing to look overhead in the direction of the stove, discovered the upper part of the shanty to be on fire. Some defect in the pipe had caused a spark to ignite the dry material of which the loft was composed. For a moment we looked at each other in consternation, for to be burned out on such a night as this meant serious consequences to us both, but fortunately water was handy and in abundance and we lost no time in drenching the building withit, so that in a few minutes we had the fire all out, and finishing our meal and making sure that there was no danger of the fire breaking out again we turned into our blankets and slept soundly, having had our fill of adventures for one day. We awoke on the last morning of our stay in camp to find Stony Point an island, in fact it had been one practically for a week or more, the water of the lake having been continually rising for some time, but the storm of the previous day and night, for it had rained hard nearly all through the night, had raised the water so high that we were completely cut off from the mainland and Billy had to bring his hip waders into requisition in order to get to the boat, which he found about half full of water. He succeeded

in tipping her over far enough to allow the water to escape, and then pulling her up to the shanty fastened her at the door so that we would not be obliged to swim when we got ready to break camp. As soon as it was light enough to see to shoot we waded out into the "blind," where we found about two feet of water over everything and gaining every moment in depth. We decided, however, to stop a little while, and putting out the decoys patiently awaited developments. A glance around the lake showed the "blinds" at the other camps to be in as bad condition as ours with no sign of life emanating from them, and we concluded that we were the only ones that had sand enough to be duck shooting on a morning like this. We stayed long enough to kill a pair of black ducks which came whistling through the "blind" with the speed of an arrow, refusing to stop to the decoys, but who stopped in answer to the call of the breech-loaders. These Tramp retrieved for us, and then taking in the decoys that had been our faithful allies for so long, we hastened back to the shanty and commenced to load our duffle into the boat; having made sure that nothing had been left behind, we stepped from the door of the shanty into the boat, and Billy having locked the door, we pushed off and turned our prow homewards, having bade farewell to our island home.

We crossed the lake in safety and having reached the landing and made the boat secure, sacked our camp equipment up to the village, winding up our vacation with a good game dinner.

Many things have happened since we broke camp on that wild and stormy morning. Tramp, the faithful retriever has retrieved his last duck and has long since been gathered to his fathers, but his master, we are told, still pursues his favorite sport, and the shores of Wequaket Lake still wake to the echoes of his gun. Jolly, whole-souled, good-natured Billy, long may he wave and wherever his lot in life may be cast, peace and plenteous provender go with him.





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