

I walked out to the back platform. Long black lines of Mallards, Pintails, Widgeon, Bluebills and many varieties of coarse ducks literally covered the two-mile-wide stream. Soon I was too wet and cold to remain on the back platform, so I returned to my seat. I noted a stout, jolly-looking chap leave his seat and hurry out on the front platform. Just then we ran past an inland slough; it was crowded with birds, so up I jumped and leaned over the man across the isle and stole a passing glimpse, then I hurried out to my back platform again—ducks, ducks everywhere. Time after time I braved the chilling rain to watch them, nearly always seeing the fat, jolly-looking chap pooping up in his seat or running in or out of the car. I noticed many curious glances cast at me by my fellow passengers. Now, I decided to try that front platform, and the fat chap about the same time decided to try mine. We met in the aisle. He glanced at me out of a bright, clean eye, just the eye to look down the rib of a gun. "Millions of them out there, millions!" he said, and he threw out his fat right hand. I grasped it saying: "Wonderful sight, sir," and hurried out. A breath of relief went up from our fellow passengers. They were all townfolk from twenty miles up stream. As word had passed that there was something wrong about us, just a wee bit unhinged perhaps: might hurl ourselves from the train at any moment. We picked all this up later and had a hearty laugh at the innocent people. Truly the hard-working class that were then settling in the valley could not understand a man's enthusiasm for common wild ducks.

Now nearly all of the breeds I have mentioned either winter in British Columbia or pass up in the spring migration. Add to these the coarse ducks, the two Mergansers and the Golden-eye, and the Buffle-head, the old squaw (kla-how-yah duck of the native tribes), the Harlequin, the three Surf ducks or Scoters—the American, White-winged and Surf and the Eider. Take a wide glance over this field. See where this huge army of red-heads and scaups and white-feathered ducks generally are nesting: north

of our most advanced line of civilization. Then look over all the big provinces and states and think of the millions of the other breeds that have reared their young—amid many dangers all over this wide continent. Excepting the poacher they had none to fear among men—the rest of the animal and bird and many of the fish creation made up a large enough list of deadly enemies. Five days ago all was well; the creeks were deserted, the drowned lands tenantless, all the mighty wild rice beds were without a sign of danger, other than Mother Nature had installed for the survival of the fittest. The last night in August fell all over this Anglo-Saxon settled land in quietude. True, to the alert sense of the wild ducks, there were many strange fires on the shores of lonely lakes, on the banks of hidden rivers. As the sun went down many strange deep explosions boomed through marsh and wood, through drowned land and slough. The swiftly flying wood-ducks saw strange white nests of men hurriedly built near the water's edge. The alert eye of the Mailard saw rows of canoes and boats drawn up in places where they knew none had been before. The long neck of the Pintail had been raised in many places and suspicious squatted black objects intently examined. Finally the patience of the bird overcame the skill of the object to remain still. It moved, and the much alarmed bird sped, calling over the marsh. True, again, had the ducks but noted it, there was much polishing up of long black shiny objects, much slipping in of bright-ended bits, much raising of the same black objects and pointing them at tree, then there was an odd winding of many round-faced objects and a most suspicious retiring into their nests of all these big animals at an unusually early hour. True, again, that some sat up nearly all night, but any observing duck could have seen that they had to empty many barrels and bottles so that they would be sick animals and could not see well next morning. And what would the wild ducks have thought of the animal that pointed one of these long black objects at another and knocked him down with