



"Now the birds began to fly so excellently well."

bilis, whistlewings, buffleheads, and squads of four varieties of surf ducks (counting the Ruddy as one), mergansers, coweens—or "Klahowyas," as the natives call them, as they do sound this word as a call—cormorants, gulls, guillimots, sea doves, sea parrots, sprang calling before us. In the deeper arms sea lions and harbour seal dozed and fished and fought. In the tide flats great flocks of widgeon, teal, the glorious Cinnamon Teal well represented, mallards, pintails, coot, and thousands of shore-birds made the scene an earthly paradise for the duck-hunter that loves the bird as well as the game. To-morrow we will get a few, eh? Had we wanted to kill many birds from our slow-moving arks all we had to do was shoot—but the novelty of it all, the unfair advantage over the enemy, the delight of being really among the wild fowl, kept our guns silent and cold—O'poots asked Fritz in most satirical manner if he had forgotten his "suk-wa-lal" (gun). Fritz, none too pleased at my order, only sulked in reply. Never mind, lad, you can make a noise to-morrow.

BEFORE dawn next morning the decoys, that have strained at anchor in so many waters from the Atlantic to the Pacific, floated on the flood tide. Before it was yet early enough to picture, the mighty masses of windfowl were streaming overhead in long, hissing lines, leaving the sheltered tide-flats for the open sea. What an innumerable host must gather there nightly if the myriads we saw in this sneltered harbour were but the remains of the feeding flocks!

Right over my decoys speeds a male whistler—there, he strikes a current of air that helps to stop him, he hooks his wings, hovers, slows—and my camera and gun sing together and the first bird of the day is ours.

With a sweep like a sharp whistle a bunch of blue-bills pass low right overhead, gun-muzzle high, back they circle and with a mighty splash take the water right in front, just as the camera clicks. Now comes a single bird, a crested merganser. Like a wraith she speeds along, darts over the decoys and is pictured as she sweeps along close to the hide—note the confusion of the feathers and change your mind—the flying wild duck is not a thing of beauty when it is, as I might say, dissected by the huge lens and swift shutter of the modern camera.

Now for a trial of skill. I have often pictured my Brant ere I shot it. Is it possible to kill a wild duck in full flight and picture it before it strikes mother earth? There are several ways of accomplishing this difficult feat. The simplest is to attach the bulb of the camera to the butt of the gun—and there you are. Yet this bluebill had time to turn over in midair between the time the shot struck it and the recoil liberated the bulb action of the machine.

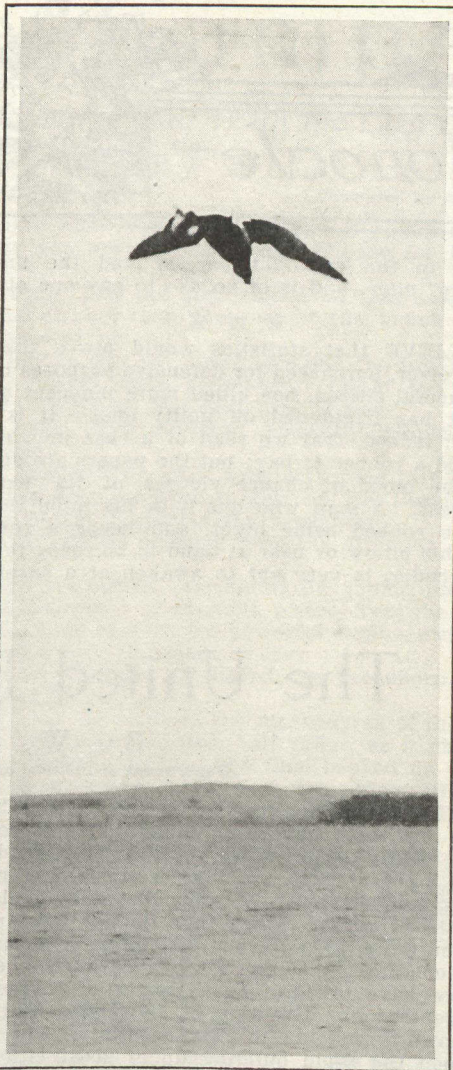
Now for a double on the cameras—a sort of a right and left as it were. Along came four Redbreasted Mergansers. As they slowed down to the decoys out rang the focal plane, and as they raised the long, hairlike feathers on their crests in alarm, the bullet took up the strain and we have a very nice little pair of pictures—a sort of coming and going set, as it were.

Oh! the unutterable beauty of it all. Outside on the Straits a heavy western "trade" was blowing. Inside, behind the spit, never a ripple disturbed the surface. A half a mile to the westward, along the spit, Fritz was tearing great holes in the firmament and occasionally dropping a duck neatly and cleanly. High over him masses of widgeon swept, calling "peet, peet!" Lower down rare bands of Brant—for it is a bit early for them yet—cried "carup-carup," as clear and sweet as bugle calls. Unnoticed, dark masses of surf-ducks whistled by, swift little white masses of buffleheads circled to his decoys and fell "splash! splash!" into the water.

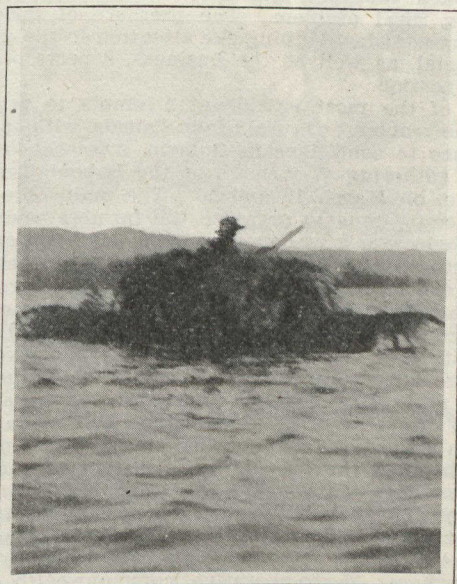
W-i-s-h, w-i-s-h! recalled me to my work. Four red-breasted ones came along with mighty rushing of wings and swept by past the decoys. Look! I have them here for you to see. No wonder the Indians marvel when I take from my pocket the pictures of some of their men that have entered the Great Unknown while seeking for sea otter or whale or high-priced seal skins.

"Skoo-kum-spo-oh" (ghost), they tell me, while their stout legs tremble and their dark, sunken eyes seem to retreat still farther into their wind-tanned caverns.

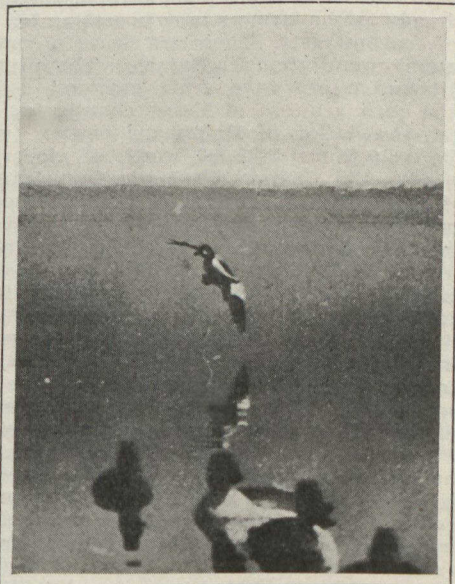
"Chief," I tell them, pointing at the picture of the dead. "Skoo-kum-spo-oh," angrily splutters O'poots—so I let him have his way, for indeed I cannot alter it. The youngsters and young men know, but the "old folks" cleave closely to the tribal lore.



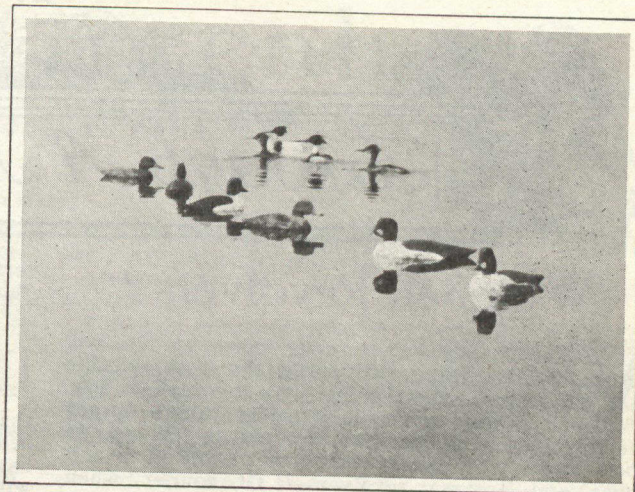
Flying Bluebill shot and photographed in almost the same moment.



A stealthy cedar bough-hide over the canoe.



"Right over my decoys sped a male whistler."



On close view these mergansers look much like decoys.

All this time four Scaup have been dozing and preening right in front of me and I ages back among the Coast tribes. Come out, "ghost-box," and by a simple action of your modern frame make these four big, handsome birds to live long after every fragmentary cell that goes to form their structure shall have passed away.

Now the birds began to fly so excellently well that I dropped the cameras and took up the old faithful gun—many a meal in times of need its well-tapered muzzle has provided. I called Kumtuks and bade him strip off the cedar hide and paddle me to the tide flats. Ten minutes later behold a long, sharp-pointed log—with just a peak of a Stetson disclosed—creeping up on a flock of Cinnamon teal that glittered on a sandbar. A hundred yards—now fifty—now twenty-five away—sat that dainty mass. I could fairly feel the Coast man tremble as he prayed "Mam-ook-Poo" (shoot); he wanted me to murder the whole bunch as it sat wondering what sort of a log we were anyhow. Fifteen yards—ten yards away now. Up with hardly a sound the little fellows rose to an oft-repeated "Mam-ook-Poo"—and shoot I did when they were a good, fair shot off, and I am ashamed to say that fourteen dropped, and after we retrieved these—if you could see a squat Coast man in knee-deep mud reaching out for a fluttering bird that is just always one inch beyond his ardent fingers, and hear him say, "Haht-haht" (duck, duck), in that dull monotone of the tribe, would make you join me in the hearty laugh I had at his floundering.

AFTER the pretty little birds were all nicely smoothed and laid away in the bow we again threaded the flats, but not all his muttering could get me to pull trigger again. I tell you it was wonderful to see noble greenheads rise quacking from a ditch about a canoe-length ahead, to see widgeon springing up all about us in hundreds. But I had a bow full and Fritz was still peppering away. He had orders to stop at twenty-five dead birds—so soon the "tack, tack" ceased. We paddled up a little fresh-water stream that entered the harbour above the flats. All the estuary was crowded with coho and dog salmon, waiting for the fall rains to flood the streams to the spawning grounds above. We saw several Blacktail deer—I did use the gun later, when the pheasants, glorious ringnecks, sped, like living jewels, across the blue sky that showed in a long strip between the high banks above us. We ignored the beves of Californian Quail that exploded from fern and gorge on either side. Later, towards evening, on our homeward trip, we saw a black bear trying to paw out one of the myriad salmon that crowded the waters.

What must these scenes have been before the pump and the automatic came, aye, before the sound of gun-powder was known? I have questioned the old folks for hours, and their answers teach us that until the white man came all the animals remained plentiful, as they were only killed when the need arose.

Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet

THE Hamlet now being portrayed by Forbes-Robertson is a remarkable creation that will probably die with the career of the famous actor; not because it is necessarily the most original or even the greatest Hamlet ever put on the stage, because about that opinions differ—some say Henry Irving, others Sothorn; but because it is the biggest vehicle of expression Forbes-Robertson has ever been able to achieve, and one of the biggest in the whole gamut of the modern stage. His portrayal of the melancholy Dane is peculiarly his own, just because it never ceases to be unmistakably Forbes-Robertson. There is no subterfuge. Listening to him you think much less of Hamlet than of the actor. You are reminded that this is a tremendous great piece of acting done in the full-blooded, hot-headed manner of a man or thirty, when the actor is already twice that age. If he had never done anything else, the world must remember this man's Hamlet, with all its stage machinery defects, as one of the finest bits of histrionic work ever achieved. It's not absolutely subtle. It is not remarkably philosophical. In places it is almost the limit of rhetorical declamation. But it is always powerful and magnificent and brimful of a glorious temperament that never grows old. Irving may have contrived a more malignant Hamlet. Sothorn may have done it with more poise. Forbes-Robertson does it with a superb action and colour and eloquence that probably go far beyond the original role.