

WILD GEESE IN MANITOBA.

BY NIMROD.

NOT the least attractive feature about the Prairie Province is the number and variety of its wild fowl. In this class the wild geese easily take first place. There was a time when these birds were considered by the law as game, and were given a close season, but they multiplied so rapidly and proved such a pest to the farmer by destroying his wheat that all restrictions as to time of shooting were removed.

There are chiefly four kinds of geese in the West, viz.: white, gray and mottle-breasted Brants; and the Canada wild goose or "honker." The flight and habits of the several kinds do not differ, except that the white Brant or "wavy" comes later in the spring and returns the last in the fall. When they pass South the farmer prepares to put by his plough. All geese now breed far to the north, or where they are not in danger of molestation

who would get a bird for his table must be up betimes and arrive at the feeding-grounds by the first indication of the dawn. Seldom can a flock of geese be crept upon. Lighting in an open field, they place sentries out to watch while the rest feed. Wily and careful indeed is the man who can secure a dinner under such circumstances. He learns that it is the habit of a goose to light where it sees others feeding. He then strives to imitate their appearance by painting pieces of tin shaped like geese a natural color, and places them at a prominent point in the stubble field where he has reason to believe the geese will come. Next, he must dig a hole about thirty yards from these decoys so that the geese in coming to them will pass over him. This hole, or "hide" as hunters call it, must be well disguised. It must be just large enough to allow one to kneel out of sight, as a large mound of earth would be noticeable. The earth is levelled and stubble and straw are carefully put over it. The cap and clothes of the hunter

his hide for some time, so perfectly disguised was it.

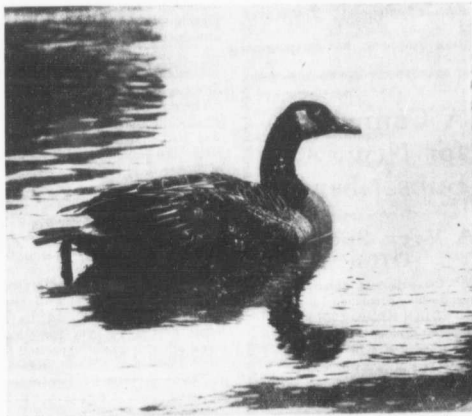
While this form of goose-hunting has its advantages, the chances are few in comparison with those obtained at such a lake as that mentioned above. Here the geese congregate in such numbers as to make themselves hard for miles when settling on the water for night. Flocks may be counted by the hundreds. Tents are pitched near the lake, and camping out is the order. Heavy guns and the best of ammunition are used. The hunter strolls out just at day-break, and watches the path that the first few flocks take while on their way to the feeding grounds. He chooses some open spot in that path and lies still until the next flock is right over him. If the wind is against them they may be low enough to be within shot, and then a good gun and ammunition, quickness and accuracy may combine to bring down a bird. An instance is on record of a hunter who fired eighty shots before he succeeded in bagging one goose. Thus it will be seen that dark, windy weather is more suitable for this style of shooting. During a snowstorm a few years ago one man succeeded in bagging ninety geese in one day. But this is one of the cases we read about.

The geese return to the water from 10 to 12 a.m. and return to the feeding grounds from 3 to 5 p.m. The last flight for the night is from an hour before sundown until dark. Thus there are four chances of flight each day, so that time does not hang heavily on the hunter's hands.

Quite an innovation for church entertainments is a wild goose dinner. In the town of Souris last year seventy-five geese were served at what has become the only anniversary of its kind in the world.

The accompanying cut represents a day with the geese at Whitewater Lake. The most of these are white Brants or wavies. The second bird on the top row, counting from the left is a "honker." The seventh is a gray Brant. The last but one on the top row, and the second from the left on the bottom row are mottle-breasted Brants. A mallard drake hangs at the bottom.

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A CANADA GOOSE SWIMMING.

Courtesy, Photo Era.

tion by man. When the young birds are feathered they are led by the old ones to the wheat belts, and here during September and October they become well feathered and fat, preparatory to their long journey South. The first stage of that journey is usually to some large water such as Whitewater Lake near Boissevain, but if the weather remains evenly open until freezing up time, many never stay more than a day or two at these watering places. When on their southern flight, many broods join in a large flock, and the manner, speed and direction of the flight is a good barometer to the observant farmer.

Geese are more successfully hunted either at their feeding grounds or by getting in their line of flight to or from their feeding-grounds. Unless very tired, geese will never sleep on land. It is their habit to fly to the centre of the body of water which they make their headquarters, and there be lulled to sleep by nature's gentlest cradle. The hunter

must be the color of grass or stubble, and there must not be the slightest movement when the geese are coming, as that would mean a warning "honk" and a severing of the flock to a place of safety. These may settle a short distance away, and by their calls attract the oncoming flocks to them. The disappointed hunter is more careful next time.

Some examples of the striking similarity of decoys to the living birds may be given. An instance is on record of a preacher who had just come to the country, and who, after creeping several hundred yards emptied the contents of his gun into a few decoys, which, strange to say, didn't go dead. Some Ontario harvesters, one wet day, borrowed rifles and started on a goose hunt. After firing fifteen shots at close range at a flock of geese, a man stood up in his hide in the midst of his decoys and wanted to know what they were shooting at! On another occasion a gentleman who had gone after a wounded bird was unable to find

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REV. A. BARKER, S.T.L.

LITERATURE is an essential of civilization. The influence of books is far-reaching and weighty. That "one is known by the company he keeps" is as true in the literary realm as the social. Books become associates, and put their impress upon us perhaps with even more positiveness and permanence than companions. As the book is chaste or impure, lofty or low, thoughtful or trivial, solid or trashy, religious or skeptical, so in all probability will your chosen companions be.

"What shall I read?" It is a wise question. And most desirable is it in our day of choice literature, much of which is not essentially Christian, we emphasize the books that tell specially