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showed the first of September.

From the fusillade that greeted these poor birds on that dim grey morning they must have thought there was an Indian concealed at the foot of every stalk.

At first they came boldly into the bed, dropping here and there as the red streak of fire showed against the dark sky, then, as it grew lighter, they learned caution, and wheeled and circled a hundred yards above us, drawing their ineffectual fire of the red men, who never will learn that they cannot stretch their guns far enough for alarmed birds.

We were greatly amused at a tame bird's work. It had strayed from some near by settlers, and every flock of black ducks that went over it called loud and long, with great success too. It just happened that there was not a hunter near that blamed bird, and all alone and unassisted she decoyed those birds and spoiled the shooting all over the beds.

One big, slow flying black duck circled over our hide, and failing to see us there down she swept into the decoys, with curved wings against the wind. We pictured her, and said "good bye, old lady," as we thought she had been good enough in giving us her picture without filling her handsome body with stinging lead. Later, some teal and black ducks flew in together, and we present you with the impression we got of them. Again a big black duck flew over and eyed every spot with great care. The bending tops of the rice concealed us, and after a couple more circles, in she dropped. She sat

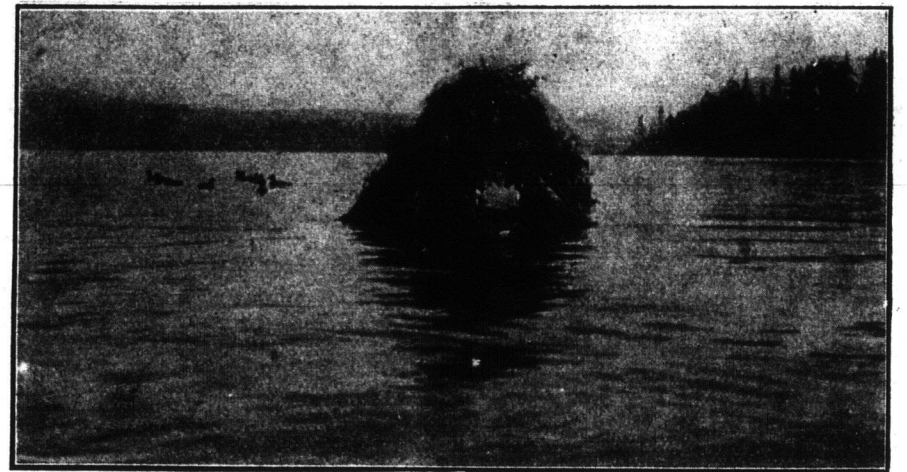
the bird over the muzzle behind me. The gun struck my shoulder, my finger involuntarily pressed on the trigger, and I killed that blamed bird after it had passed slightly behind me out of my sight—one of the worst scratch shots a man ever made.

"Fine shot, sir!" called the innocent.

"A dirty scratch!" I yelled back. Thus the Nature student has some fun even in the rice beds.

Next day the shooting was poor; so soon do these birds learn wisdom. There were as many black ducks on Rice Lake as usual, very much on the lake as they had all gathered in big flocks far out in the widest places in mid lake, and there they sat all day nor did they fly into the beds that night, and give easy shots to the red man with his fearful ear-splitting gun. No, not they. They lit in the water half a mile from the rice beds, and swam in after dark. From our camp we could hear them feeding and splashing and tipping up, sounding like a whole school of boys in swimming.

We had noticed a flock of tame ducks and young in a near by bay, and we had also noticed a young banker from Toronto. This young financier paddled out looking for a shoot for the next day, found out one, but never told a soul at camp, not he. He set off before daylight, long before, and the first gun we heard was his. Oh, the banging he kept up! This attracted the attention of the owner of those tame ducks. The owner paddled fast, the young Toronto hunter shot all the faster; was he going to share his good shooting with



Our floating hide for photographing the wild fowl.

as still as if carved from a cedar block (there is something wrong every time you see a duck do this), she eyed the hide intently, and jumped like a shot when the curtain ran down. No sooner had we wound up the big machine than another fell into the decoys with a great splash. She was ours in a moment—pictorially—and away she flew quacking.

Now remember we are only mortal. The birds were flying well. The redskins were popping away like mad. Every bay and marsh was booming. "Bung—rip—bung!" went the old muzzle loaders. Deathly guns, dangerous at both ends. "Tack-tack!" went the sharp reports of the white mens' smokeless shells. There were two guns and shell boxes in the canoe—why say any more—we ate black ducks for dinner!

There is one thing I wish to note here—if a dead black duck, once it is laid in the canoe, could be reduced to a unit without burdening us too much we would be thankful. Luckily the visitors do not live long.

We timed the flight to-day; slow, no wind, the birds did not exceed fifteen miles an hour, easy shooting. But let them come in on a heavy south-wester and the story is different. I have timed them up to over forty miles an hour, and punched many a hole in the air, right behind where the duck had been.

Now there are duck shooters and duck shooters. There were three behind me that night of the latter class, their calling was unique: "Ducky! ducky! ducky!" they called, I thought in fun, until the constant call assured me of their childlike innocence. Then an old black duck flew straight at me, right overhead. I had the aim right, and the speed right, but lost sight of

this stranger. Not he. The owner yelled and paddled faster, and still the shots rang out. At last just as the last poor duckling was nearing its doom, the owner arrived in haste and some temper. Result: fourteen dead ducks and twenty dollars costs, as these had been reared by this guide for live decoys. The worst feature of the whole deal was that the young banker took those badly dead tame ducks back to the city. Could we incubate a sportsman's soul in him?

The wild rice harvest was in full swing, and every morning after the shoot was over the whole village was afloat, gathering the black grain. It grows in from twelve to fifteen feet of water, and stands from three to four feet high; it is fully ripe at this date.

The squaw seated in the stern raps with two cedar sticks the bending grain when a steady rain of ripe rice, seen an inch long, about as thick as the lead in a pencil, falls into the canoe. The buck in the bow has hard work forcing the canoe through the heavy, standing grain.

By the noon hour the canoes are well laden, and away goes the procession of water harvesters to the island camp singing their weird Ojibway songs. Basswood canoes with two big hunters, log canoes with buck and squaw, little dugouts with young redskins paddling might and main, all pass by, singing as they go.

At the camp the unripe grain is roasted or parched in great iron pots, and later fanned in the ancient style, the squaw simply throwing it into the air, so that the wind may blow the chaff away while the cleaned grain falls into the bark trough. The ripe grain is then hurried into bags, and away go the heavily laden canoes to the nearest