

OUR DUCKING TRIP

By F. H. CONOVER.

The "Erle Eau," Kent Co., Ont., is known far and wide and has become famous for its duck shooting, boating and fishing, and natural advantages to those seeking a few days or weeks of rest. The summer months can be spent in cottages or beneath tents adjacent to the borders of its waters, where a gravelly beach gives room and comfort to boaters and bathers, during the weeks of the summer months. Its waters are dotted with numerous row-boats and graced with the wide-spreading wings of speedy yachts and sailboats. In the distance, on either side of the lake, gradually widening, are the marsh lands stretching back to the timber with numerous ponds, channels and flat nearly the entire length of the Eau, and woe to the belated sportsman who is so unfortunate as to become lost at nightfall in its vast expanse. At the end or as commonly called the foot, is the Provincial Park, where is the fine commodious dwelling of the Park Ranger. The Park enclosure contains about three or four acres, with an eight foot wire fence surrounding it. The enclosure contains moose, deer, wild turkeys English and Mongolian pheasants. The land about the Park and dwellings, and for many miles to the south, is of a sandy nature, connecting with loam soil as it nears the marsh. The timber is chiefly pine, scrubby oak, and occasionally a few ash with swamp willow. The formation of the land at this point is remarkable, having the appearance of gradings or as if large trenches had been made for breast works and the hand of Time had somewhat levelled it. The north side of the Eau joins the mainland, a rich and fertile farming country, the homes of many wealthy farmers and retired gentry. The entrance to this veritable Paradise is at the south, where it flows and ebbs into the treacherous Lake Erie, having an entrance of three hundred (300) feet wide, on the east side is the historic "Pond Eau" lighthouse and its keeper's dwelling, so strongly fortified by the massive crib work on the sides of the channel. The light is red and white flash, to distinguish it from the other lighthouses, and its popular and well known keeper, Mr. W. R. Feller's, is

always on hand to welcome visitors and friends. Across from the lighthouse is the terminus of the Lake Erie and Detroit River Railway, where is constructed an immense dock and slip entrance for receiving the Lake ferry car coal boat "Shenango."

It was at this terminus we landed on the 18th October, after we had first bid adieu to the flourishing town of Leamington, the Gas City of the Garden of Ontario. Our merry party of duck shooters who were to make world's records on this event were as follows: Bert G. Westcott, John Conover, Louis D. Johnstone, the "Chef" and the writer, not omitting his distinguished and well trained pointer dog, "Budd Lansdowne." Our outfit was a paraphernalia of perfection pertaining to a ducking outfit, two large heavy weather tents under which our comforts of the outing were to be stored. The boats were already at the grounds as well as the decoys and other articles that were not perishable goods. The men occupied something over one hour, about 50 miles, and soon we were in sight of the spot that would afford us many days' sport and pleasure. Well, you pesky duck shooters, you had better get a move on, came from the good natured baggageman, and after greasing up, we fell to and soon had our traps piled off and ready for ferrying across to the prospective point of camping. We were fortunate in obtaining a large flat boat for transportation, in which we packed our valuables, keeping the perishable goods always handy for manipulating in case of wet feet, which is not uncommon among duckshooters. We were soon under way and with a favorable run, made our landing. All hands jumped out, and gave the old familiar spot a warm greeting. After the tents had been set and well staked and the house arranged to accommodate the outfit, the "Chef," Jim, began his end of the campaign and in a few moments the odor of steak, (not moose) foretold that a three o'clock dinner would soon be awaiting us.

Our house is made of canvas and staked well to the ground. The "Chef" announces dinner. Oh! what a welcome sound, for steak, potatoes, peas and

corn is on the bill of fare. After the cravings of the inner biped had been satisfied we enjoyed the fragrance of cigars. After finishing the storing of the boxes and chests, it was suggested a trip be made to the ponds for prospecting. The marsh boats, especially designed for that class of shooting, were got ready and in which were stored a good amount of wild grass and high-rice stalks for screening the boats, if needed, from the sight of any suspicious birds. The channel connecting the head of the chain of ponds lay close at hand and easy of access, where our boats lay and soon we were off to our prospective grounds. J. C., the writer, and L.G., in order named, pushed off while B. G. W. made a shore trip down the Eau, and across to the ponds below. John allowed as the weather was somewhat mild that our prospects would not be very inviting for a full bag that evening. As we pushed through the first pond occasional coots would offer long shots, which were deferred on account of the chances of jumping rice ducks. As we rounded the first point a teal on cross flight came a little too close to John and his pumper answered with one to its credit. Each one pushed on to their choice of location, securing as good a cover as could be obtained, and pitching out a few mallard decoys we were soon ready for all comers. In the meantime "Burt" had reached his destination, a pass between two large ponds that formerly had yielded profitable returns to his game boat. Glancing about I saw that my companions were lying low, which indicated birds in sight. In the distance were a pair of mallards working toward our locality and well up, and would about cross Bert's position. Suddenly they quickly ascend, two shots broke the stillness, and the two ducks collapsed to grace the interior of the shooter's hunting coat. A small flock of gadwells came near giving me a shot, they veered away and passed close to Lewis, apparently, he securing one with his second shot, a drake. We had no more shooting until about sundown. I was thinking over the past labors of the day and musing on the enjoyment that the future two weeks would afford us, when I was suddenly disturbed by the swish and rustle of wings; above me and too high for a shot, was a flock of black mallards making a general survey of the feeding grounds, quickly working eastward. Soon they circle and retrace the track made, each circuit lower and lower; now they have seen my decoys and with a sharp swing