

## Canadian Wayside Sketches.

## DUCK-SHOOTING.

Let it be understood, by way of preface, that the duck-shooting here spoken of is that generally experienced by the many, and forms no part of the programme of the favoured few who have been inured in its mysteries from their youth up even until now, and who consequently can sit down and plan their fall campaign, with as much solemnity and *nonchalance* as a conductor of funeral obsequies (that I believe is now the correct expression for undertaker, *vide* Toronto papers), and who can then coolly go out, and select their particular brace of birds, from any particular flock observable anywhere in the horizon between their top lever, safety block, choke bore, hammerless breech-loader, and the setting sun; with them I say we have nothing to do; "noblesse oblige," we can but make obeisance before them, but for ourselves, we of the miserable "hoi polloi" can but take our sport as we find it, and be thankful.

Under any circumstances, however, no matter how adverse, there is a something indescribably fascinating about duck-shooting—I am convinced there is nothing to equal it in its power of Delilah-like attractiveness and general usurpation of entire domain over the human mind. If I had a son whom I desired to bring up in the way he should go, and whose aspirations were high, and tended towards a bank clerkship or the chair of a Sunday-school teacher, or some other exalted position in the world's battle-field, I would call him unto me and say unto him, "My son, the snares of pleasure are many, and they will be ever open to entice you from your daily pursuits, go forth—gamble if you will, play billiards if you will, keep a fast horse if you will, go to the devil generally if you will, for there will be yet a chance to reclaim you, but, my son, never, oh never go duck-shooting, or you are gone, both here and hereafter, beyond all redemption, beyond even the power of those edifying articles contained in 'the only religious Saturday,'—'the Mail,'—to save, and you can't well go further than that, for if they won't help you saltpetre can't," (for that combusive and inflammatory commodity forms also the nucleus of the *Mail's* Saturday mandates). I would then quietly take my own gun, and leave the boy to his reflections.

You arrive at the marsh shooting ground and try vainly to assume a careless and *insouciant* air, as if you had not been thinking over the expedition for the past two months, both day and night. It is a miserable attempt, however, and no one is so conscious of the fact as yourself; you are inwardly trembling with nervous excitement, of which there are unmistakable outward and visible signs. N.B.—This is the invariable and customary time to take a horn—for luck. There are other and more or less variable times, as you will find out later on, but it is never on any pretence omitted here, but on all these occasions you must not forget to perform this act with a classical and reverential air, pouring out a libation, so to speak, to the gods.

If you are wise, you will have secured the services of a punter, for the man who can paddle his own canoe and shoot ducks is being worthy of veneration, but forms no criterion as a guide to the novice; if you live to the age of Methuselah you may perhaps one day strive to emulate the achievement, but you had better wait, or in your undue haste you may find yourself paddling with your gun and taking aim with your paddle. Speaking from experience, I know the first day I tried it I started with a stock of six paddles (cynically suggested by a friend to be quite an adequate stock), and four of these became firmly imbedded in the unfathomable depths of the muddy bottom, past all recovery, whilst the other two subsequently sailed off majestically towards the distant lake when I

was placidly looking round me for a moment; as a consequence of this *contretemps*, I have a distinct recollection of spending that night standing on a muskrat house and of afterwards discovering three holes in the bow of the canoe, which, I believe, were not there when I started. I find no entry in my diary of any ducks bagged this day, but it is attributable no doubt to the fact that one can't well write up a diary on a muskrat house, their being a sort of quicksandish feeling under foot, which prompts you to stand alternately on one leg, and militates seriously against calligraphic efforts; this, I say, may be the cause of the omission, or it may be, however, from other reasons, I can't say; but this I know, that towards early morning, one old rat peeped out to take stock of me, and remarked as plainly as possible "Well, and so you are the darned fool who frightened all the ducks out of the marsh yesterday by your imbecile manoeuvres, you are a fine specimen of a scarecrow anyhow; let me know the next time you come out, and we will be on hand to give you a decent interment free of charge, you seem dressed for a funeral anyway—good morning, and now clear out of this at once, you infernal, idiot, yahl!" I have had an antipathy to muskrats and their houses ever since.

Your punter having now stowed your traps on board the canoe, and made all things snug, (always use nautical expressions on these occasions), is ready for your embarkation. This is a matter of grave import, and requires the utmost dexterity in deep water, or you will find yourself executing the wildest gyrations and most spasmodic bows, as you endeavour to use your gun as a sort of balancing pole, till both it and you disappear with a splash; no, you must go aboard with as much caution and dexterity as if boarding a cockle shell in mid ocean, or the result is speedy and obvious.

For my part, I deem it better to embark on *terra firma*, get seated, and then be quietly launched by the punter, who will afterwards step in with as much confidence as if treading the quarter-deck of the *Great Eastern*. You will of course not forget to grasp both sides of the boat firmly, and close your eyes till he is seated, for as your own position is of that attitude usually assumed by industrious tailors, you can't well turn to watch his movements without disturbing the equilibrium; the more especially is this the case if you chance to wear a stand-up collar, for this will effectually prevent the slightest revolution of the cranium on its axis, and concentrate your vision directly on the bow of the boat, and if a duck lights there you will see it, but otherwise not; before the day is over, a well-starched stand-up collar will produce a stiff-necked and apoplectic appearance worthy the dignity of a Toronto Alderman, but quite out of place in a duck-shooter with only a moderate allowance of the "crathur."

The days of muzzle-loaders being over, it is quite unnecessary to recount the awful experiences undergone in loading them when seated in a canoe, none but an old hand ever attempted the performance standing up; it used certainly to be the cause of more lost temper, more lost ammunition, more lost ramrods, more lost guns, more lost limbs, heads, lives and profanity than all other inventions of his satanic majesty—let us be thankful we live now in the days of breech-loaders.

Ah! there is a momentary rustle in the rice-bed just by you, and then two fine duck rise and skim like an arrow over the open water, straight ahead, a fine chance, but before you have caught your breath and recovered your stupid senses, "the abyss of heaven has swallowed up their form."

"Why you not shoot?" asks Antoine, and echo answers, Why?

VIATOR.

(To be Continued.)

## Dooley at Halifax.

MR. GRIP:—

DEAR SIR—I'm fixed at the "Halifax." Since I last slung the black fluid to you I've been down the city—this gay and aristocratic city, where Joe Howe stood up for constitutional government, (I don't exactly see why he should have sat down for it), and where the for-Lorne Marquis has just come with his batches of Anglo-Saxon criturs. What a 'eavenly prospect for the North-West. I've seen curious sights and heard curious speeches. I've had a grand banquet given to me, for your honour, by the Grits. Long live the Grits, and may they be blessed. But I'll proceed to narrate my heart-stirring adventures.

I called, Y. A. N. (yesterday afternoon) on the editor of the Daily A—R—, a Grit newspaper, which is the terror of evil doers and the Conservatives. The editor of the D—A—R—is a great man. He believes in Blake. So do I. If any man says he believes in Ed. Blake I see a great man before me. The editor of the D—A—R— believes the N.P. is a failure. Sez he to me, "Mr. Dooley, it is a failure—you see it is a failure!" Sez I, "I see!" Sez he, "Mr. Dooley, it's a artful dodge of John A." Sez I, "it air!" Sez he, "Mr. Dooley, if I can go into Parliament to serve the people, I will. Yes, sir. But no N.P. for me. No syndicate, no monopolies for me. No, sir. I would rather be hung out on a clothes line on a blowy day than sacrifice a single jot of the people's interest. The people's interest is published and circulated at \$5 per annum, and all by my public spirit and benevolence. But no dodge, no local syndicate for me!" Sez I, "Not a dodge, not a local syn. 'Rah for Blake! Mr. editor of the D—A—R—, you air a man, you air a patrit. We're all patrits. We're all Grits, and lovers of our country. We want power. We don't want money. Mr. editor of the D—A—R—, farewell! Be decent, and you will be prosperous!" With which observation I proceeded to my hotel.

Yours truly,  
HOSEA DOOLEY.

FANCY PORTRAIT OF OSCAR WILDE.