

a stream of fire. So it seemed, then, when all the other animals came crowding around the same old excuse rang out—making even the wild things of the woods chatter in derision—"I didn't know it was loaded." And what would they have thought of the animal that drew one of these same black objects towards him, small end first, out of one of the canoes? I can imagine them thinking, "Well, we are all right; these animals have started to commit suicide."

Twelve o'clock on the night of the last of August. All's well; the whole continent seems asleep. One o'clock, September the first,—there was just a hint of a suspicious rattle in a canoe and a flare from one of the white nests, but the rattle was not repeated and the flare died out. Two o'clock,—many fires are breaking out from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Southern states to Northern provinces. Truly, there must have been a universal oblation of killed pig, as the odour of frying bacon is borne on the east wind, on the north wind, on the winds that blow west and south. Three o'clock—many lanterns are gleaming in woods and along rivers, many muffled noises are heard from a scattered fleet of a hundred thousand boats, manned by a quarter of a million of big eager animals—the navy. A mightier host, the army of the attack, a million strong, move silently along dusty roads, and creep along forest paths, or wade as silently as water will let them through slough and swamp and marsh land.

Where are the invaders? Truly, there must be a mighty host attacking our hearths and homes that father and son, brother and lover, should thus armed creep along in the dark. I tell you, fellow sportsmen, there is no quarrel of kings, no diplomacy of presidents, no national insult that would arouse this same prowling army to the same keen sense of unsatisfied desire—'tis surely the last fires of our savage ancestors smouldering within.

But what of the enemy? Asleep! In many a pool, on many a tussock, on many a half submerged log, in the center of the little sloughs, rest and slumber the under-sized part of this army of

feathered invaders. They have been lured by a false sense of safety to revert to the natural habits of their primeaval ancestors—and they sleep after the easily gathered late evening meal that bountiful Mother Nature provides. The mature birds and the birds free from maternal duties are yet greedily feeding in the wide wild rice beds, in the wild celery-grown shallow lakes, in the open slough where the myriad seeds of wild fruit and grain and flower tempt them.

Four o'clock. The overfed host are showing signs of repletion; already the deep call of the Mallard, the querulous cry of the Wood-duck, the sharp quack of the Teal, tell the meal is ended and it is almost time to seek the silent, safe, secluded places where for weeks they have daily nodded and dozed, where feather strewn logs tell of bathing and preening and oiling of feathers. Already in the east is seen a dim line of light along the horizon. If this host could look into the shadows of that safe, secluded place they might dimly discern a half-hidden glowing coal and scent an odour of burning weeds. In fact the first incoming Teal did, and sped back calling loudly, but there was a muffled rapping on a hollow sounding wood and the glow of the coal disappeared hissing into the black water.

"Quack! quack!" call the leaders of the flocks. "Quack! quack! myamph! myamph!" answer the scattered birds from all over the wide feeding ground. The line of dim light has lifted and now the horizon is a pearly gray. "Flap, flap," two great wing-beats sound out; there is a sound of muffled thunder and part of the feeding host leap aloft and speed back to that safe-secluded place.

Now from Atlantic to Pacific, from the Gulf to the Height of Land, as the ever-eastering world throws daybreak over marsh and forest, while yet the shadows linger, breaks forth a line of fire unequalled in any battle yet imprinted on the page of history. Every pool and creek, each river and lake, all along the mighty arms of the sea pours out this red crackling flood. The air is rent by loud "bang" of heavy ten-bore, by sharp "tack" of light, smokeless-loaded guns,