

Dear, good reader, do you ever go a hunting? Did you ever knock the feathers out of a duck as he skimmed past you in the blue ether of heaven, swerving neither to the right nor left at the crack of your gun, but continuing onward as before, only more impetuously, and leaving naught behind to solace the disconsolate hunter as he stands with empty gun, gazing longingly into the hazy distance whither the object of his heart has disappeared? Truly I believe you have not. But perhaps you have a brother, or a cousin, or, perhaps, a friend, who patronizes the duck marshes and game markets, too.—one of that kind who shakes the hand of his warmest friends

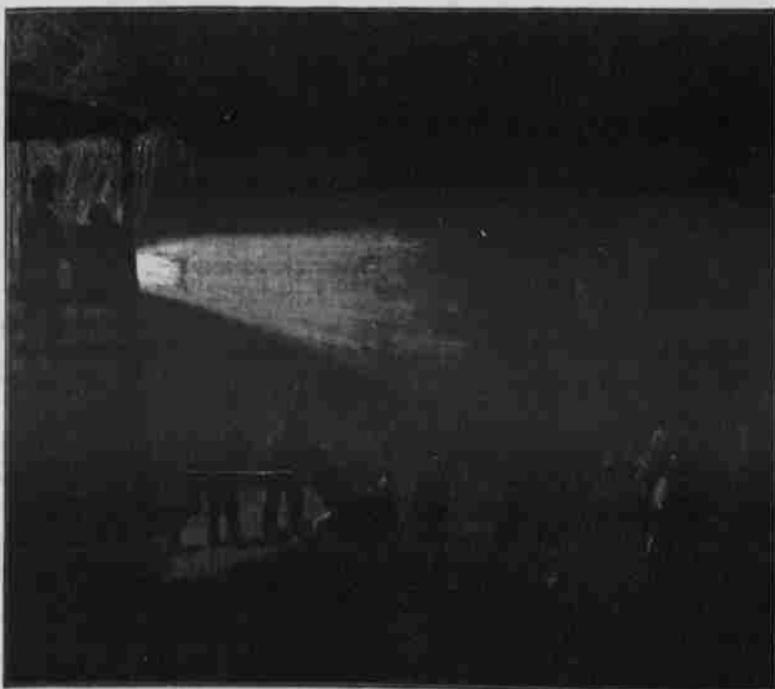
before leaving for the field and tells them he is going out for a couple of days' shooting—"just for a change"—but never sees you again for a whole week after his return. To come down to the plain truth, do you recollect ever starting out gunning without really intending to bring home something that particular time sure, and lots of it? And did you ever bring anything home?

The days are gone from us when we could go out around the pasture after the first fall of snow and bring home a string of large, green-headed drakes or a venison. Hunting nowadays is on a more systematic, or drop-a-nickel-in-the-slot, plan than when we used to gather round the old barn yard of the farm on New Year's day and Christmas, blazing away at a turkey on a box about a mile distant—those days of the old fashioned rifle with the rheumatism, and of quarter beeves and jugs of good, hard cider. In the city we are stylish. We have the very best guns and whiskey, the choicest breed of setters and retrievers, and, in fact, all the modern comforts and appurtenances thereunto belonging. But I remember the last "shootin' match" we had on our farm. It was Washington's birthday, and it snowed, and snowed—and then stopped, and the wind blew as cold as Greenland round all four corners of the old barn, and the boys stood around half frozen, peppering away with their old, rusty rifles at a target set up down the lane, and told funny stories and chewed tobacco and smoked measely old pipes, and seemed pleased over the day's outcome, although the stock did not come up for a week afterward to either salt or feed, and an old sow that had pigs never showed up at all.

Portland sits 110 miles from the sea and the tide along her front ebbs and flows some three feet, but the salt in the water is not felt until we go down the Columbia 100 miles. Away from the inlet of the sea clear to Portland, on either bank of the Columbia, grows the rich wapato plant—the favorite food of the wild fowls that visit the North Pacific coast. Lake after lake on either hand is studded thick with this dainty food of the webfoot family. And it is upon these lakes that the sportsman builds himself a blind of reeds and brush, from which he shoots his mallards and canvasbacks and widgeons as they come dropping into the lake after the wapato. Some of the finest duck shooting grounds in America lie along the Columbia river. It was but ten years back that first class duck shooting could be had within twenty miles of Portland: but now the lakes and grounds have been shot and hunted over too continuously, and the result is that birds are not permitted to come into, or

anywhere near, the lakes and sloughs they have been accustomed to. Still, as long as the wapato grows in our lakes and bottom lands, and just so long as the great family of webfooted game birds fly north and south each year, clinging to our coast line, will we be sure of having plenty of duck shooting.

Heretofore it was the practice to go gunning wherever inclination prompted, whether on private or public property; but now, by the enacting of wholesome trespass laws, privileges to hunt over choice ducking grounds have become so valuable that scarcely does there remain a lake or shore or point of land jutting into the flight of the wild fowl that is unleased or unguarded. This condition of affairs was brought about by a practice the sportsmen of the city of Portland inaugurated some years ago of subsidizing one of the many little steamers plying in and out of Portland, wherewith regular and stated trips are made down the river, exclusively designed for hunting; and so soon as the plan showed evidence of becoming a reliable custom all the big wapato lakes and principal shooting grounds anywhere within fifty miles of the metropolis were eagerly sought after by hunters and readily leased by them at fabulous figures. The rivalry to get hold of these choicer shooting grounds became, indeed, so animated and bitter at times that relations between some sportsmen, which had been of the pleasantest character theretofore, became estranged, and companionship and even acquaintanceship cut into; and in other instances the courts of law have been appealed to for the adjustment of grievances. It was at about this period when the discovery was made that many of the farmers living along the river bottom country, and on whose lands these wapato lakes and shooting grounds were situated, held title to their land through simple occupancy, and without having complied particularly to the letter of the various laws governing the acquirement of property, and this opened up a vigorous war again for the possession or leasehold of the better shooting grounds. It appears that when congress granted the state of Louisiana and Arkansas and other states great quantities of swamp lands belonging beforehand to the United States government, Oregon was included in the list. The act, briefly told, obliged the state to examine and determine and select the various acreage of her swamp and overflowed land unfit for agricultural purposes and report the findings thereunder to the interior department. As early as the seventies, and perhaps before, the state's authorities fulfilled their obligations, and the lands as selected were appraised by the state land board, and filings thereunder for purchase immediately began. Many hundreds of thousands of acres were thus purchased of the state of Oregon by citizens thereof who, in good faith, paid down promptly the twenty per cent. of the sum per acre, and were given swamp land certificates representing the accrued title so far as the state then had. But these selections made by the state agents never were approved in toto by the department at Washington, and the result has been that those who settled upon the land in fact have one right of title and the parties who hold the state's certificate another, and the railway companies, by virtue of their government grant, perhaps a third. The matter, however, is now pending final



MAKING A LANDING FROM THE DUCK BOAT.