

Chadwick's Gunning House, Squam Beach.

(As it was before it was rebuilt two years ago.)

TAKEN FROM:

SHOOTING AND FISHING for YOUNG SPORTSMEN

BY: T. ROBINSON WARREN

1871

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This excerpt from the above book was a reprint from an article he wrote for: "WILKE'S SPIRIT OF THE TIMES" November 19, 1864

DUCK SHOOTING IN BARNEGAT BAY: Last week,having a little spare time on our hands, we resolved to go down to Barnegat Bay and have a shot at the ducks, and we accordingly announced our intention in family council,..... our better half immediately had a vision of a week's rollicking, unbecoming a pater-familias, to be followed by a sharp attack of .... rheumatism. The youngsters, however, received the announcement with demonstrations of evident delight, as being suggestive of long stories for approaching winter's entertainments, and forthwith began to "quack" and "honk", in the most deafening manner, and frantic rushes were made for our boots, over-alls and shooting equipments generally. Our preparations made, we proceeded to the steamboat, but found to our consternation, shared by some 20 sportsmen, that she was incapacitated and could not leave. An hour of awful suspense elapsed, setters and pointers gave forth low growls of dissatisfaction, and gunners, after staring each other in the face and out of countenance, gradually, under the influence of case bottles, grew friendly and breathed vows of vengeance aqainst steamers generally. A substitute was, however, finally furnished, when, shifting our traps, we were soon steaming down the bay, and a picturesque group we formed, in our gunning costumes, with half-a-dozen thoughtful dogs artisically interspersed among us. Away we whisked down the bay .... through the Swash Channel to Port Monmouth, and thence by rail and stage to Tom's River, where having had a capital feed, we got aboard the little "Zouave", and stretched across the bay to Bill Chadwick's. "Quango" the great Newfoundland, saluting us as we touch the beach, accompanied us to the house, where we found a "goodlie" company of gunners assembled.

The little low bar-room looked cosily familiar to us, as we peered through a cloud of tobacco-smoke, as did the faces of the ... gunners there assembled,-Jno. Harbor,Zeph., Charley Stout, Dave,Lishe,Jno. Gaunt, and the rest of them, as they warmly welcomed us. The style accommodation is peculiar to the beach, and gunners are generally expected to sleep double. We ourselves, were too tired to be particular, so we turned in with our boatman, and had hardly, as we thought got to sleep, when a candle flashed before our

eyes, and a rough shake of the shoulder, brought us to consciousness that it was 3am, and time to get up. Without waiting to yawn, we sprang up, and in a quarter of an hour were arrayed in full shooting costume and were sitting down to a substantial breakfast. It was still pitch dark when we slipped into our sneak boat, nor indeed had the day fairly broken until we were comfortably sitting in our blind, with our gun at halfcock,waiting for a flock of ducks. By way of digression, let us state what is, in our opinion, an essential to the comfort of the duck shooter. What we call blinds in the northern part of the bay, are simply points of meadow, jutting out into the bay, always damp and frequently very wet; on the extreme end of these points, a circular rampart of reeds and sea grass, about 30 inches high is thrown up, within which the gunners recline, watching their decoys, which float at anchor within 30 yards of the point. Now as the gunner is always exposed to the bleak winds sweeping over the meadows, and is obliged 20 times a day to lie flat on his back in the wet sedge, it becomes necessary to provide the proper clothing to guard against a thorough wetting..... We therefore make the following suggestions, viz:heavy woolen stockings and the thickest possible woolen drawers and under-shirts, as well as a worsted muffler for the throat, with a pair of long loose rubber boots, and over these again an oil-skin suit (the color of the sedge).We also should advise an India-rubber army blanket, or a buffalo robe, and an army satchel for ammunition.

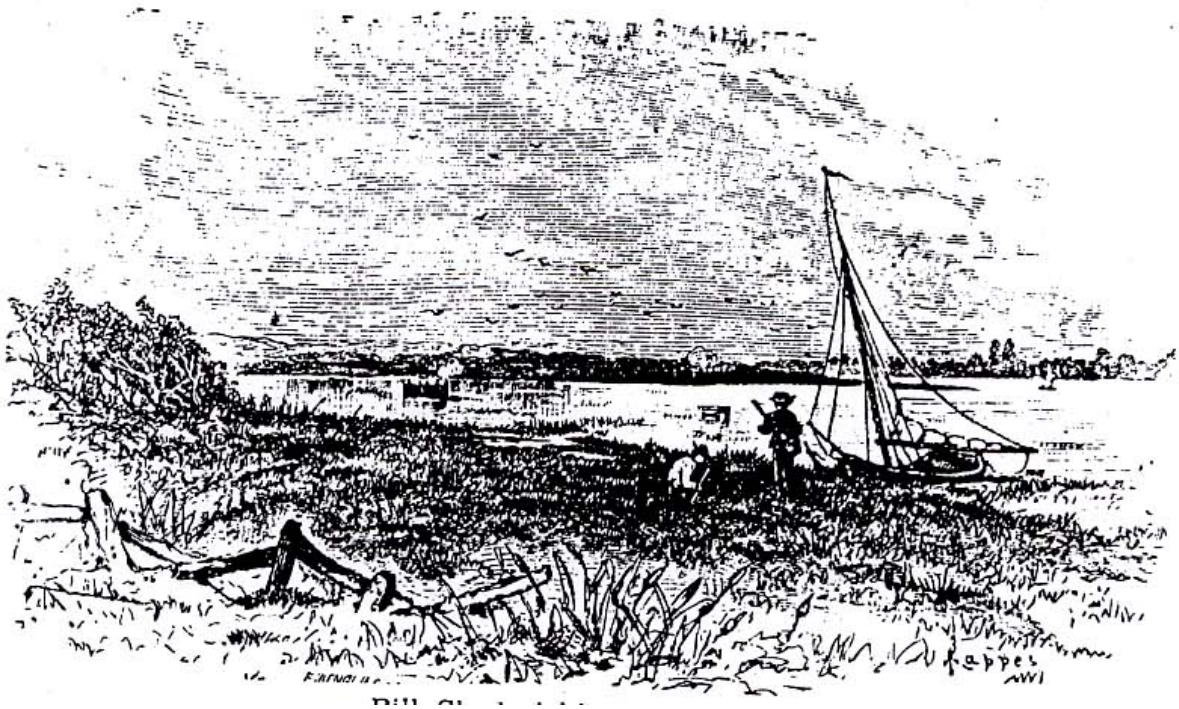
When we broke into the foregoing digression, we were reclining on our batteries awaiting a shot. Unfortunately for us, however, the wind had been strong from the northwest for six weeks past and was then blowing therefrom, the very worst possible direction, and the weather had been so mild that the ducks had hardly begun to migrate and the only ones that one could hope to get a bang at were the regular traders, who rarely came to stool.... Just as day was breaking, however, half a dozen dippers came down and took a look at our stool, but seeing the point, wheeled and shot away, but took with them a couple of charges, killing two and crippling a third. Barely were we loaded again, when "quack, quack," goes the gunner, and 3 black ducks come sweeping along, spy the stool, give an answering "quack," but sail out of gunshot. Hardly are they gone by, when down we go again--p-r-r-r,p-r-r-r, and up come a bunch of broad-bill, and as they flutter over the stool we give them 3 barrels and turn them over on their backs; while loading, a flock of mallard poise over us for an instant, answer our "quack," but catching sight of us, are off again; hardly are we capped before, just over the edge of the horizon, we see a long string of geese heading for us this time, and we as flat as pancakes-(a small pool of water trickling down the back of our necks)*** "Honk, honk" from the stand- "honk,honk goes goosey, and down comes the flock within a couple of hundred yards of the stool, then follows a long conversation between the inmates of the stand and the different members of the flock- first, the conventional "honk," which being politely answered is equivalent to "How do you do?" "Very well, thank you!" Then comes a low quack,quack, quack, this last quack signifies walk in if you please, after which, as

(continued on the next page)

goosey more nearly approaches, a dialogue in an unknown dialect ensues between fowl and gunner, which generally ends in the slaughter of the victim. ....Hallo! here come the ducks again, three big black ducks-quack! quack!-bang! bang!-down go two and away swims off the third, badly hit though. "John! how wild the birds are, don't you think they get wilder every year?" "Well, yes, in the earlier part of the season, but when the flight begins in earnest, the new comers come to stool as well as ever" "There are a good many gunning houses along the bay,-eh, John?" "Yes, coming down the beach from the point, there's Jakey's, Bill Chadwick's, Ortley's, Amos Grant's, and Martin's at the inlet, Double Jim's and Kenzie's below that, beside a score on the main, and they all have their advantages too. In the early fall, the shooting at the head of the bay is best, but toward December, when the geese and brant come, we think Double Jim's and Kenzie's kill most; but Bill Chadwick's is a sort of intermediate place, embodying greater advantages than any."....Although we have before described Chadwick's we will again venture a few passing words upon it.

Imagine a sand-spit betwixt bay and ocean, say eighteen hundred yards across, of glittering white sand thrown up into hummocks of all conceivable shapes by the autumnal gales, and midway between the raging surf and the waters of the bay a large, low beach-house, the roof sloping down to within six feet of the ground, sheltering a low corridor surrounding it, the only other building in sight of the life-boat station. Everything is suggestive of desolation as we approach, all the gunners being absent on the various points. Not a soul is to be seen, the only visible object beside the house being the debris of wrecks, here a rudder with its spokeless wheel and torn steering gear, there a spectral looking spar, encircled by the top, looking like the cross which, in Spanish countries, is raised over the murdered man.

As we step ashore, "Quango," a Newfoundland bitch, who swam ashore from a wreck, comes down to meet us, expressing the most canine affection



at our return, and as we walked into the yard everything reminds us even more forcibly of ruin and desolation; and as our eye wanders over the "head-boards" washed ashore from wrecked ships nailed along the corridor, we unconsciously read aloud the names: "Samuel Willetts," "Pilgrim," "T. Hathorn," "Darax," "Honduras"-and a husky, croaking, shaky voice at our side says: "Aye! young man, you may well speak low, you would whisper those names if you had see'd what I have see'd. I see'd em all come ashore and helped save all them as was saved, and to bury them as was dead." Heigho! there were some fine lads amongst those fourteen men-as they lay stiff and stark on the cold wet sand, and the "poor dear," as she stood upon the broken deck, her hair streaming in the wind, with her arms around her husband's neck; and afterwards as they lay together in the clear moonlight with faces as white as the sand about them, and their arms, though stiff and stark, still encircling each other. Eh! boys! you may well look sad-you may see 'em yet in any wild night as the moon breaks through the cloud drifts, if you walk along the beach. But, though desolate outside, there's no cosier place within than Bill Chadwick's, and we defy any one to be gloomy as he sits about the bar-room fire after the day's sport is over, exchanging experiences, cleaning guns, replenishing ammunition and listening to a Mosaic conversation never outdone since the building of Babel.* * * * Every gunner has his say; every phase of duck-shooting is discussed; guns are inspected and compared, and loud above the rest a young man is eloquent upon the beauties of Hakodadi women, appealing, in support of his assertions, to another who had spent years in the China seas smuggling opium.

This polygot is going on in an atmosphere of tobacco dense as a London fog, indeed in that low murky room scarce six feet high from floor to ceiling, barely lighted by a kerosene lamp, whose flickering flames struggled with the tobacco fumes for mastery, there was a grouping picturesque in costume, noble in form, with surroundings of fowling gear and game that would have delighted Vandyke or Murillo.



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