

to a ridge about two miles off, and said our destination lay the other side of that. Despair and rebellion filled our hearts, and I think we should have struck there and then, had not the presence of a few ducks on the small lake before us caused some excitement, and given us a promise of better sport to come.

After a rest, well out of view of our quarry, we made a stalk of the "pond," and as it was deep, with dry swamp right up to its edge, and a fringe of high flax and tea-tree around it, we got in several effective volleys before the birds vacated the ground—or rather the water.

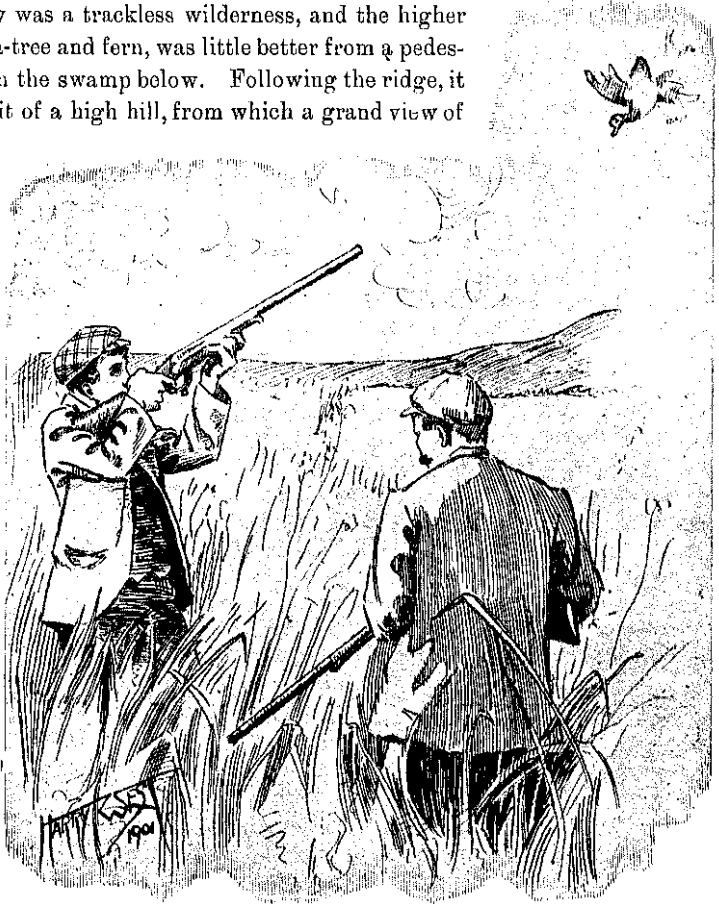
Somewhat restored by our success and a few biscuits, we continued our way. The country was a trackless wilderness, and the higher ground, with its tall tea-tree and fern, was little better from a pedestrian point of view than the swamp below. Following the ridge, it took us over the summit of a high hill, from which a grand view of the "Land o' Lakes" was obtainable, and which, from the clear evidence of trenches, pits, and ramparts, had in the distant days of barbaric Aotearoa been a native *pa* of some pretensions.

Leaving this we plunged down into the swamp once more, this time, thank goodness, for a short distance only, and fighting our way through the scrub, we arrived at length, breathless and perspiring on the ridge that had been our guiding star for sometime past.

Below us, about a mile away, was a lake of about fifty acres in extent, and in the calm of the late afternoon it

looked peaceful indeed, lying there in its placid beauty, hidden away far from the habitation of man. But to our eyes the pleasantest sight of all, and the one that cast all other considerations into the shade, was the presence of innumerable dark objects closely clustered together at the southern end of the lake, making it appear at the distance as though the contents of a gigantic pepper pot had been shaken over the surface. We knew that these specks were ducks, thousands of them, and the sight of their brave array at once drove out of recollection all memories of our arduous tramp.

Keeping as much as possible out of sight, we followed a shoulder of the ridge leading down to the water's edge, but when we reached the bank and peered through the rush-matted tea-tree that fringed the lake, we found ourselves still too far off for effective shooting. There was only one method to adopt, to cross several intervening spurs and attack the enemy from the low swampy ground on the south. Leaving Wi and the



WE LET GO AT A BIG GREY DUCK.