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An Ornithological Swindler

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registering fifteen to twenty-four degrees below zero with a frequency and persistency that is quite unusual in this vicinity.

On stormy days the birds were not seen about the city, but they seemed quite indifferent to the cold, and when the sun was shining, even though the temperature was extremely low, they literally swarmed upon the branches, and on the ground beneath the mountain ash trees, in the squares and gardens; nor did they finally leave until every berry had been devoured.

I had almost neglected to note another occurrence for which the past winter will remain remarkable—the advent of *Passer domesticus*. Somewhere about New-Year's day a small detachment of English Sparrows—the first that are known to have visited this Province—arrived at St. John in a car of grain shipped from some western city; and, somewhat in the style of other 'cheeky' visitors, these pests act as if they intended to 'stay all summer.'—MONTAGUE CHAMBERLAIN, *St. John, N. B.*

Second Addendum to List of Birds Ascertained to Occur within ten miles from Point de Monts, Province of Quebec, Canada; based chiefly upon the Notes of Napoleon A. Comeau.—Mr. Comeau has sent me skins of the following-named species, taken by him at Godbout, and not previously recorded from that locality:

157. *Saxicola œnanthe*. Shot May 18, 1884.
158. *Passerella iliaca*. Shot Oct. 11, 1883.
159. *Spizella monticola*. Shot in August, 1883.
160. *Passer domesticus*. Shot May 27, 1884.
161. *Empidonax flaviventris*. Shot in August or September, 1883.
162. *Tringa canutus*. Shot in August or September, 1883.
163. *Accipiter fuscus*. Shot May 2, 1884. Tolerably common; breeds.
164. *Melospiza lincolni*. Shot June 2, 1884.
165. *Melospiza palustris*. Shot June 2, 1884.
166. *Falco peregrinus nævius*. Shot June 2, 1884.
167. *Passerina cyanea*. Shot June 8, 1884.
168. *Siurus auricapillus*. Shot June 9, 1884.
169. *Sphyrapicus varius*. Shot June 13, 1884.
170. *Picoides tridactylus americanus*. Tolerably common.—C. HART MERRIAM, M.D., *Locust Grove, New York.*

CORRESPONDENCE.

[Correspondents are requested to write briefly and to the point. No attention will be paid to anonymous communications.]

An Ornithological Swindler.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

Sirs: A case of ornithological swindling which has lately come to my notice is of such an aggravated character that I feel it my duty to make the facts known. They are as follows:—

A certain museum in this State, wishing to increase its local collection of birds, engaged the services of a professional taxidermist and collector, whose reputation for honesty was supposed to be above suspicion. He was furnished with lists of desiderata, and instructed to supply the species as soon as they could be obtained; it being distinctly understood, however, that only birds actually taken within the limits of a certain county would be accepted by the institution. For a time everything worked to the satisfaction of all concerned. Birds fairly poured into the museum, the cases were filling fast, and the collector's zeal and energy were not less evident than gratifying. His success in obtaining rarities was remarkable, for in less than two years he supplied specimens of nearly every species which has ever occurred in Massachusetts. This of itself should have early caused suspicion; but, fortunately for him, none of the officers of the institution were ornithologists; so such birds as Rough-winged Swallows, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Wilson's Plover, etc., continued to be received with perfect confidence in the carefully recorded data which accompanied them.

At length, however, a gentleman familiar with Massachusetts birds visited the museum, and upon examining its local collection became convinced — from evidences which need not be mentioned here — that all was not as it should be. The curator, at first unwilling to believe ill of his trusted ally, was finally induced to put a watch on his movements, and as a result discovered that he was ordering bird-skins in numbers from various dealers; and, furthermore, that there was little doubt that many of these skins were afterwards mounted for the museum and, supplied with imaginary data to suit the requirements of each particular case, were sent in as veritable — County specimens. Through the kind coöperation of one of these dealers (who, it should be said, had been hitherto ignorant of the use to which his birds had been put), positive proof of this was speedily obtained, marked skins (whose labels were carefully recorded) being furnished by him to the collector, who at once fell into the trap, and after mounting and relabelling them sent them to the institution.

When directly charged with this and similar practices, the hardened wretch denied his guilt with the utmost effrontery, nor was it until he had been confronted by the proofs that he finally broke down. It is satisfactory to add that he was forced to disgorge his ill-gotten gains, and that the officers of the museum recovered nearly, if not quite, the whole of the money which had been paid him.

In the present connection it is not necessary — while it would be, for certain reasons, ungracious — to mention the name of the institution above referred to, especially since it has purged its cases of all specimens to which the slightest suspicion can attach; but no considerations, whether of mercy or personal delicacy, can warrant the withholding of the collector's name. His offence is not simply that of wilfully defrauding a trusted employer; it reaches — or at least might have reached — very much further. For had his falsely labeled specimens passed unchallenged, dozens of erroneous records would have been inevitably published

and perpetuated.* In short, the interests of ornithology demand that a case so flagrant be made an example of warning to all who may be tempted to commit similar crimes (the word is a strong one, but let it stand). Accordingly I hold up for the contempt of all honest men the name of Emery C. Greenwood of Ipswich, Massachusetts. It is to be hoped that there are no more such deceivers in our midst. If any are known or suspected let them be promptly dealt with.

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM BREWSTER.

Cambridge, Mass., June, 1884.

Can we not have a Simpler System of Nomenclature?

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

Sirs: The present seems a fitting time to test the views of ornithologists as regards a new nomenclature. So much has to be crowded into one's life, that in general the simpler the basis of our knowledge is, the more will interest be awakened; and so it is with ornithology also. If we would have a nomenclature that will endure, we must make it as simple as possible, so that it serves our purpose. And ornithology can be made easy, without at all retarding its advancement, and at the same time, not be continually in an unsettled state as regards nomenclature. For ordinary purposes, of what use is the generic name? Is there a case where the family name will not serve as well? If there are two specific names alike in one family, then one should be changed immediately. The family name will answer every purpose and much better than the generic; and if the present generation does not adopt it, some future one will, for complication will not stand the wear of time where simplicity will do as well.

If the family name is used, the ordinary well-read people will master the rudiments; while now none but specialists know anything of ornithology by its scientific appellations. This change will in no way be detrimental to the student either, for he will know just as well what *Turdus mustelinus*, *Turdus migratorius*, *Turdus polyglottus*, and *Turdus rufus* are as though *Hylocichla*, *Merula*, *Mimus*, and *Harporhynchus* were used, and the general reader will know he is reading about a Thrush.

Many of the family names carry with them their own meaning, while very few of the generic do. The family names of the bird-world would not be very difficult to master; but who can say the same of the generic? Those of this country are known perfectly by very few.

But doubtless the question will be asked, What shall become of the generic names? My reply is, leave them in the scientific books, where

*As it was the escape was a narrow one, for at various times during the past two years he has been kind (!) enough to write to Mr. Allen and myself concerning some of his more interesting captures, in more than one instance actually giving a detailed account of the shooting of a specimen in Massachusetts which we now know came to him in the skin from *Norway*. Fortunately these notes were not fully trusted, and only one of them — that of the Wood Ibis, announced by Mr. Allen in the 'Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club' (Vol. VIII, p. 185)—was actually published.