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CONCERNING SOMETHING HARD TO ENDURE.

There are degrees and varieties of boredom in the world, as there are degrees in everything. The different varieties, however, never could be accurately classified. Very few men are bores at all times, though some men maintain quite a uniform standard in their capabilities of killing interest and evoking weariness.

The cause of borish propensities in the greater number of every-day instances may safely be ascribed to the combined selfishness and thoughtlessness of the borish individual whose desire is to have his own preferences of time, place, conversation and company paramount to all others. He considers himself, not others.

While there is a vast field of common interest in life, every age, station and occupation has its own special interests. Even the days, often the hours, are so subdivided to meet the cares of duty or business that any obstruction to the routine is an annoyance or hindrance, or possibly a loss. There are times when one's company or speech is out of place, and this generally when there is an annoying lack of common interest.

Any man who fails to recognize these facts, and to regulate tactfully his actions accordingly, will unfailingly achieve more or less of a reputation as a bore. Thereafter he will be looked upon more as an affliction which cannot be cured than as a desirable companion, or one at least who could be pleasantly tolerated. Nearly all bores have a common failing of talking too long and too much.

In a general way the bores of every-day life may be divided into two classes—he of the first class may be agreeable and worthy of esteem; his conversation may be both instructive and edifying, but he may be heedless of the length of time he exacts while visiting his friends in the midst of their business or other cares, and also heedless of whether or not time can be spared to him. The man who is occupying the time of another, which should be devoted to the serious duties or interests of life, cannot justly feel hurt if his friend betrays preoccupation or lack of interest in him.

Thus a man may be a most interesting companion in himself and still be a bore by encroaching on the time of a friend who is engrossed in other matters.

The bores of the second class are much greater in numbers and are found everywhere. He may be an interminable prattler, whose vapid nothings neither please nor instruct; he may, on the contrary, talk well, but only on a subject which interests no one but himself; his supreme vanity and self-confidence blind him to the annoyance and discomfort he causes to others.

And where do the bores congregate? Everywhere. On the suburban trains he drops into a seat occupied by a passenger busily engaged in reading. He immediately makes a trial at a conversation regardless of his rude interruption. The slightest encouragement starts him under full way, and the victim may thereafter hold his paper ever so suggestively in an attitude ready to resume his reading and it will avail naught. The bore is fond of talking and talk he will.

At the banquet he flourishes always. Though he talk on a dead flat of inanity, he imagines he is in astonishing flights of witty or entertaining oratory, and generally the poorer talker he is, the greater avidity he displays in seizing every opportunity to talk in season and out of season, regardless of the visible fatigue of his listeners He is one of the kind which consumes both the time and patience of his audience—a double bore.

At the theater he can be heard while the play is in action explaining the plot to his companion and all that is to occur in the following scenes, with such frank criticisms added as he can invent. His eagerness to display his knowledge overshadows the fact that he is spoiling the effect of the play to his companion and making himself an irritating infliction to everyone within hearing.

There is no one who has not met the bore, and will meet him again. He may have a mission in inculcating a greater patience in his victims, though that is doubtful and hard to believe; it is much easier to comprehend how he could utterly destroy it. And yet the victim is not without his defense, for by having a long and tiresome story to tell in return, with much circumlocution, repetition and particularity every time the bore appears, he will soon be checked from the similar feelings in himself which he inflicts on others. The borer is always a poor boree.

But while there are habitual bores—made such by nature, education and favorable opportunity—there are others who are unjustly accused of being bores, and of those are the men who "talk dog," or "talk gun," or "talk fish," etc. Sportsmen who are holding a mutually pleasant conversation over the merits of dogs, guns or rods, or of sport on land or water, are not boring each other. If a sportsman talks on his favorite theme in a company which has no interest in it—and such lack of interest is indeed rare at the present time—it is simply enthusiasm out of place. The instance is a very exceptional one when a sportsman will descant on the pleasures to be enjoyed in his favorite sport, or when he will recount the incidents of former pleasures with dog and gun or rod and reel, if his audience shows a lack of interest. There may be an extremely exceptional instance in which there are bores in respect to their favorite sport, but even then they are such in a good cause.

The bore sometimes creeps into literature, but there he fares less happily, for while it is frequently a difficulty or impossibility to refuse to listen to his oral efforts, it is not difficult to refuse to read his writings.

Forest and Stream's pages are free from him, for in it are ever writings of common interest, crisp, instructive, well written, the best of their kind in knowledge and scope of subjects covered, and their sources are bounded only by the geographical ranges of the game, large and small, of the world. Nowhere is there more freedom from the annoying, the uninteresting, the wearisome.

FEDERAL FOREST PROTECTION.

Very slowly, but none the less surely, the public interest in forest protection is increasing. Secretary Noble showed his appreciation of its importance when he caused to be set apart the forest reservations made possible by the act of March 3, 1891, and now Secretary Smith recognizes the needs of these reservations by asking from Congress legislation which shall give reality to these reservations, which as yet exist only on paper.

This subject is one to which frequent attention has been called, and we have often pointed out the absurdity of proclaiming that a certain tract of land is a forest reservation and yet doing nothing to make it one in fact. We had twenty-two years' experience of this mode of caring for the public rights in the Yellowstone National Park, and how it worked there is well known. A proclamation or the establishment of regulations by authorized officers of the Government are good just in so far as they are backed up by the power of the Government to enforce them and no further. No legislation looking to the preservation of our forest reserves has ever been enacted by Congress. No law exists by which offenses against the public can be punished. While most of the national parks are protected by troops, even these guardians have—or until very recently had—no power to do more than expel from the reservation an individual guilty of violating the regulations established by the Secretary of the Interior. It is surely time that an end were made of this farce. The forest reservations should have the protection which they so greatly need and without further delay.

The ridiculous inadequacy of the means now at the disposition of the Interior Department is shown when it is stated that there are only thirty special agents who can be employed for this purpose, and when it is remembered that the forest reservations aggregate many millions of acres, lying in widely separated portions of the continent, in Alaska, on the Pacific coast and all through the Rocky Mountains.

Secretary Smith recommends the passage of Mr. McRae's Bill to protect public forest reservations. He believes that the enactment of the measure would enable the Government actually to accomplish something toward protecting the public possessions. Under present conditions it can do nothing. The bill ought to pass, for the reason that it authorizes the Secretary of War to detail troops to guard the reservations, just as they are now detailed to look after the Yosemite, Yellowstone, Grant and Sequoia parks. If Congress shall authorize the employment of troops for this purpose some temporary relief may be had from the ravages of the timber cutters, sheep herders and forest burners, who are now destroying the forests of these reservations. Aside from this one point the bill, it must be said, has little to recommend it. It is loosely drawn, contains no provision for the punishment of offenders against the regulations established by the Secretary of the Interior, nor any process for their arrest, trial and punishment. It contains provisions permitting the cutting of timber under restrictions which may easily be evaded.

It would seem that when Mr. McRae introduces his bill its form might be so changed that it will at least provide some form of government for these forest reservations—some method by which law can be enforced within their borders.

SNAP SHOTS.

The "fake" mills are still grinding. First it was a yarn about Alaska duck-egg destruction; then about Long Island cabbage beds ravaged by deer; and now it is about carp—500 tons of them taken out of a New Jersey pond. A New York paper reported the other day that when Vreeland Pond, in Passaic, was drained Poles and Hungarians flocked to the muddy fish preserve and carried away 500 tons of German carp. There was a roundness about this 500-ton carp "fake" which struck the fancy of the Forest and Stream's statistician, and two minutes with a piece of paper and a lead pencil evolved an interesting computation. Now 500 tons equal 1,000,000 pounds; the market price of carp is 6 cents a pound; 1,000,000 pounds at 6 cents would make $60,000, quite a snug little value for the Poles and Hungarians to bear off. Again, allowing to each one of these fortunate recipients of the harvest of the New Jersey mud-pond fertility a horse and wagon to cart his plunder home in, and reckoning a half ton to a load, 1,000 wagons would be required; and reckoning that each wagon would require 20 feet of space in the procession, there would be a train of carp-laden vehicles 20,000 feet or four miles long. Altogether it was a big haul of fish, the biggest ever known in these parts, and almost as wonderful as the great Kekoskee bullhead harvest. But, unfortunately, unlike the Kekoskee bullhead story, this one was not true, not by 490 odd tons of carp. What did take place at Vreeland Pond Warden Shiner tells in another column, and it is an interesting story too.

The New York Fish Commission financial muddle appears to be growing more serious as new developments are made. At a meeting last week the Commissioners announced that they had been compelled by shortage of funds to dismiss fifteen of the thirty-three game and fish protectors, and with them Clerk John Liberty, who has so long done valuable and efficient service in the office of the Chief Protector. This is the pretty state of affairs that has resulted from the happy-go-lucky regime of the former Commission; it is precisely what might have been expected when the Fish Commission of New York was prostituted by Governor Hill to political purposes, and men were put into the board whose sense of responsibility was so slight that they treated the office as a choicely humorous affair and their own connection with it as a huge joke. Ex-Secretary Doyle, whose accounts have given the new Commission so much trouble, has been getting the blame for the financial complications the old board left behind it; but the pertinent question is: What were the Commissioners doing that their accounts got into such a condition?

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barefoot, with his boots in his hand, and without means of sustenance, bound, he said, for Grand Falls, 100 miles of wilderness between him and his destination.

I have often wondered what happened to him. His manner, his incoherent replies, his indifference to the perils of his position, his peculiar religious tendencies, indicated that he was not in his right mind. If Risteen had not fired his rifle the poor old man, lying there without a fire, blanket, food or knowledge of his whereabouts, was in a fair way to starve. That vast tract of mountain and forest is an extremely bad place for a man who has neither food nor fire. Yet somehow our lost man had worried along through this world for more years than

THE LOST MAN.

had any of us who had pitied him. He was not afraid of the big woods. And perhaps he came out all right. Perhaps he did not; in that case, he found a cemetery without troubling anybody very much. Mr. Braithwaite dismissed him from his mind by saying: "Well, I've been in these woods all my life, and he beats me." I have presented his picture and so much of the story as I know to the readers of FOREST AND STREAM. What do you suppose became of him?

FREDERIC IRLAND.

WHAT THE SIGNS DID.

THE haze of Indian summer was in the air and the rays of sunshine filtered down, bronzing the dried buffalo grass and the buttes, making all one color, tinting, toning softly down, until the rugged outlines were lost in the blue distance.

A dreamy, contented air seemed to have settled on all things in this great lone wilderness as they silently waited for the passing of the summer and the coming of the blizzards which would soon be sweeping across the country, born of the north wind.

At such times all nature reminds one of an old, old man, white-haired, withered and palsied, a man who has had good days, but who has passed them and is slowly wasting away, dying from the mere lack of vital force to keep him going, dying as the white-bearded milkweed dies, from a want of heat and moisture. Such an old man is nature, basking in the sun and waiting for the winter of death to strike him down; old, very old, and with seams and wrinkles on his face, basking in the sun for warmth.

So thought I as I rode along, with rifle across the saddle pommel and eyes and ears alert for any indication of game, for I knew the fat blacktail deer were basking in this same sunshine, lazy enough so long as they were safe. I also knew that the blue haze did not dim the ever watchful eye of the old buck, whose antlers were like a plum thicket for branches and whose nose was ever pointing in the wind for the first sniff of danger. I knew that old fellow, knew I was in his country and out of meat. I wanted a deer, and that old buck was the one deer above all others.

Wasn't his track nearly as big as those of the last year's mavericks that mingled with it in the mud around the spring? Didn't he look lordly as he bounded up the mountain side last week? Wouldn't that set of horns make a first-class hat rack in the hall down in the States? I wanted that set of horns and I was going to have them, there was no doubt about that.

On I went, letting the wiry little cayuse pick his own way over the rough ground, until I reached the spring, where a few pines stood shoulder to shoulder around the damp spot—a mark to be seen for miles, crying in a dumb way, "Here is water, good water; let him who thirsts drink."

I had quaffed the treasure that they guarded and had thanked the pines for showing me the place. They had whispered and pointed to a huge track in the mud, and the mountain breeze had sung, "Here is the spot. Here the big buck drinks too, for he knows that this is the best water for miles around, and his taste is only for the best."

While the horse drank I walked about and saw his track again, big and fresh and close together. It sunk deep in the mud where he had loitered in the water, while the sun rose until the level beams had shone into his big brown eyes. He had paced back and forth this last morning, nipped a killikinick bush here, a tender shoot of tule there from the only bunch at the spring, and taken a taste of bunch grass from the hillside; at peace with himself and the glowing morning as he watched the sun come up from behind the Bearlodge range for the last time.

At least so said the signs, and they have only a true tongue.

When the sun was up the old buck stalked away along the hillside, over the ridge and toward the cedars that fought with the winter wind for life. These cedars stand close together, that the living may support those who die and turn gray like dead men's bones when the north wind chills their hearts and the snow weaves a winding sheet for them.

All the wild things are friends, and the old buck went to the cedars and they hid him when he slept. They wove their dead bones against his antlers until both were one, and they painted their tufty leaves with blue until you could look at the buck and see only cedar trees, or look at the cedars and every one was a blue buck, so cunning are they.

Yet the signs know and tell tales to all who know them, and I listened to the signs.

They knew where the buck went and they made it all so plain that soon the cedars whispered in the old buck's ear and said, "Fly."

Then the buck stood up and looked about and smelled the air. The air gave him nothing, for it was traveling the wrong way. The cedars blinded his eyes, for they could not move and show him danger, they could only whisper. Then the signs pointed him out as he stood there big and grand, and I knew he was mine.

Silently the rifle looked at him—and spoke.

The lead found his side, but he did not fall, only bounded away, hurt to death, yet he would strive to live.

In his flight he bounded with full, strong leaps along the mountain side. Then the rifle looked again and sung to him, twice more it sung and the big buck went down. My long knife ripped his skin and drank his good red blood, and so he died. Soon he was bound on the horse and carried away from the cedars, away from the spring and down the mountain side, and made meat for the ranch, and good moccasins were made from his skin. See you that head? That was his.

Thus it was he died, betrayed by the signs when the blue haze was on the mountains and the world was like an old man sitting in the sun.

EL COMANCHO.

HOW FUR IS CAUGHT.—III.

Snowed In.

WHEN we awoke on the morning of our first day at the camp on Turtle Lake we found a heavy, damp snow falling, covering all the woods with great flaky fleeces, and lying light and deep upon the ground. We were afraid to start out on the trail in so wet a snow, as the stringing of the shoes was certain to wet through and stretch—a condition of affairs much to be dreaded by the web shoe man. Moreover, Norris was not sure of his inclination or ability to finish the journey over the line, the hardest of which was on ahead, including two nights or more out in very rough shelter. We therefore lay in camp, and spent the day in talking. Some of the things which our trapper friends told us may be of interest.

Elk, Moose and Turkeys in Wisconsin.

I asked Brandis if he knew of any instance where elk or moose had ever been seen in Wisconsin. He said that some years ago on the Ripley Richards farm, near Antigo (some ninety miles south of where we were), three pairs of elk horns had been found under water in a lake.

In Forest county, Wis., in 1893, both Frank Brandis and Fay Buck more than once saw a "great big animal, black, with no horns," which was living in a swamp, and which "wouldn't run, but trotted fast." They both shot at it, but never knew what it was.

In 1892 a timber cruiser killed a moose between Hurley and Ashland, Wis. (about forty miles from where we were). A homesteader by name of Tommy Ryan had this moose located and was waiting for it to get fat. He was much incensed when he learned it had been killed.

Old man Buck spent his youth trapping in the Michigan South Peninsula. He says that thirty years ago there were wild turkeys below Grand Rapids, Mich. At Cadillac, further north, there never had been any so far as he could hear. He could tell of no proof of elk or moose in the South Peninsula. He thought the buffalo once lived in the South Peninsula, and later in Wisconsin, as well as the wild turkey.

(O. W. Sayner, of Plum Lake, Wis., told me that there is a steep bluff or hill about eight miles from Eau Claire, Wis., which is known to-day as "Elk Mound." Tradition says that forty years ago an elk was seen standing on top of this mound. Joe Blair, a trapper of Big St. Germaine Lake, said that years ago his father found one elk horn in a marsh in Fond du Lac county, Wis. I have heard of other horns found in this same county.)

More Curious Game Stories.

Brandis told me that in 1893 he saw quail (Bob White) in Forest county, Wis. This is most singular, though I do not doubt it. Forest county (where the moose was also seen) is away up in the pine country. In the lower part of Wisconsin, in the farming and hardwood region, the quail run wild. (Who would look for quail in North Dakota? Yet Ed. Bowers, of Fargo, in the Red River Valley, saw a small bird fly into a plum thicket a few years ago, not far south of Fargo, and on putting the bird up and killing it found it to be a Bob White quail, the only one ever seen in that country.)

Panthers.

Our trappers said that twelve years ago, in Altegamme county, two panthers were killed between Bear and Maple creeks. The fall after that one panther was seen near Clintonville. Neither of these had ever personally run across any panther sign in their years of trapping.

Wolves, Lynx, Otter and Marten.

Our trappers said that the gray wolves of upper Wisconsin were the largest of the United States. They drove the deer a great deal. A pack of seven wolves had twice crossed their lines that winter and they had poison out for them. Wolves swept across a great deal of country, thirty, forty, fifty miles or more, and did not remain local. The lynx also traveled a great deal. A lynx usually came around again in about seven days, and the wolves once in two or three weeks, though not so regular as the lynx. The otter also traveled a great deal, but was irregular. It would sometimes leave the water courses, and travel miles across dry divides to entirely new country. The best place to trap marten was along the high ridges between waterways, and that was best also for fisher. They quite often caught fisher, but never had a wolverine.

How to Trap the Shyest Animals.

Our trappers rated the fox the hardest animal to trap, the wolf next, and the otter third. To catch a fox they often made a bed of chaff and got him to lying in it or fooling around it, the trap being set under the chaff. Or a trap was set at a place where several foxes seemed to stop for a certain purpose. Or a fox could be caught sometimes by putting a bait a little way out in the water, and then putting a pad of moss between the bait and the shore, with the trap hid under the moss. The fox, not liking to wet his feet, would step on the moss and be caught.

For wolves the usual way was to put out poison (strychnine). Often they would not touch the poisoned meat.

For otter it was necessary to use great care, not leaving any chips or litter around. Our trappers usually caught them either on a slide or at a place where they came out of the water (not where they went in, as the otter slides with his feet doubled under and would be apt to spring the trap with his body). It was a good way to drop a limb or stick on the side of the slide, cutting it down and letting it fall naturally, so that the otter could not so easily escape the trap. The trap should never be set in the middle of the slide, but at one side, as the otter's feet are so wide apart, and he would not be caught should he spring the trap with his body.

For otter and beaver, if they were trapped near deep water, a sliding pole was usually used, arranged with the

A BLANKET CAMP.

small end stuck down into the deep water. The animal when trapped plunges into the water, and the ring of the trap chain slips down along the pole. The little stubs of the trimmed-off boughs prevent the ring from slipping back up again, and the animal is drowned. An otter should not be left in the water over nine days or the fur will slip. A few days makes no difference. All traps should be visited about once in six to eight days.

Beaver.

Our trappers said there were very few beaver left. (Protected absolutely by law in Wisconsin.) The beaver was an easy animal to trap. A good way was to find where he came out of the water and to put a dead stick (not a green one) across his path. If the stick were green the beaver would pick it up and carry it into the water; but he will always stoop down and crawl under a dead stick. Then he steps into the trap. Our trappers had caught seven beaver that season. The Indians watched the beaver very closely, and if they located a family always got them all.

"Black-tail" and Other Deer.

Having heard it said that there were some strange deer seen in Wisconsin at times, I asked my friends about it. Brandis said he had noticed a difference in the horns of

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the deer, there being two sorts: one was flat-horned, with "narrow, white horns;" the other "round-horned, with dark, round horns." The latter sort always had shorter legs than the other. Dave Cochran, between Eagle River and Buckatabon Lake, killed a deer said to have been a black-tail. Joe Blair, a trapper, said: "I think it was a black-tail."

Our trappers thought the deer were gradually working West along Lake Superior, away from the cut woods.

The mice and porcupines eat up the shed deer horns very fast.

The Indians killed the deer at any season. So did about anyone who wanted meat.

In October, 1894, in one month, over one road, from one region of Wisconsin (that in which we were trapping), there had been shipped 3,650lbs. of short saddles of venison.

The horns of deer do not depend for size so much on the age of the deer as on its condition. If a deer has had a good winter its horns are good, and *vice versa*.

Indians.

Our friends said they had often found arrowheads and the like in their travels. I asked them about the chain of signal mounds, said once to have extended from Lake Superior south to lower Illinois. They were unanimous in the belief that, no matter what other Indians may have done, the Chippewas were too lazy to build any signal fires.

The Chippewa method of catching bass is with a 5ft. rod and a 2½ft. line, with a big frog for bait. The squaw does the fishing, the buck paddling the canoe softly along the lilypads. The bass jump at the frog and are jerked into the boat before they know what has happened.

Ginseng.

Ginseng, or "ginshang" root, is one of the staples in the trappers' world. He traps fur in the winter and "hunts ginshang" in the summer. Nearly all fur buyers handle ginseng also. It sometimes brings $80 a pound. The root when dry is light and pithy, yellow-white, of flat, insipid taste to the beginner of its use, though the trappers say that one can get in the habit of chewing it all the time. The roots are long and slender, and do not yield much to the plant, and the plant is scattered, a "patch" of it being held a lucky find. Brandis, who is one of the best of ginseng gatherers, had some at the camp, and we saw and tasted it. He says that often in getting this plant in the hot, close woods, the mosquitoes are so bad that the hunter has to keep a bit of lighted punk in his hand while he is working. Of course, he has to stoop over, with his face to the leaves, and the mosquitoes are too much for most men. Ginseng is sold nearly altogether for the China trade. Some dealers are dishonest and cheat the trappers who send in ginseng. One trapper "plugged" a lot of ginseng with shot once and made a good thing of it.

Trout.

Brandis had fished brook trout for market. He said the Evergreen had been the best stream he had fished in late years, but the catches were made by wading the stream down through the swamps, which was cold, hard work. The fly could not be used.

Muscallonge.

I was told that thousands of pounds of muscallonge had been annually speared and shipped in the winter from the Manitowish chain. This had not been done so much on the Turtle Chain (which is Chippewa water, lying to the north of Manitowish chain), except near the railroad, where the lakes were entirely cleaned out by the market men and Indians.

The feed of the big muscallonge is largely the "red horse," of which sucker the Turtle waters contain great numbers, they coming up in thousands in the spring.

Fay Buck told me that when they first went into some of the Turtle waters the 'lunge were very bold. On three different times he has had them strike at a metal-bound oar which flashed in the water. Once the teeth of the 'lunge marked the blade of the oar. This fish (or one taken near there soon after) weighed 29½lbs., and was caught by J. W. Donnell, of 254 Wabash avenue, Chicago. On No Man's Lake Fay had a 'lunge strike at a tin cup which he was trailing in his hand over the boat side. Mr. Donnell and Mr. Chas. Jarnegan, of 12 Sherman street, Chicago, saw this. The same thing happened on Rainbow Lake, in the presence of Dr. Smith. The latter wanted a drink, and Fay thrust the tin cup into the water, when a muscallonge struck it.

A 6lbs. muscallonge was found by Fay Buck with a 6lbs. sucker fast in its mouth. Both were dead.

Sea Serpent.

Our guides had heard tell of the famous sea serpent which once infested the Madison lakes, and which Mr. Norris called to mind. This creature used to chase the loons which lived in those lakes, according to Mr. Norris.

Flapjacks.

Fay was very expert at cooking flapjacks. He declared that he once threw a flapjack through a hole in the roof of a tent, and then went outside and caught it in the skillet, other side up, as it came down. This, it must be admitted, is thirty-third degree work.

Cedar Bark.

We learned that dry cedar bark makes the best kind of insoles for rubbers or overshoes, keeping the feet warm and dry and not chafing them.

Unknown Country.

We were told that we would in our trip cross lakes which are unmapped and unnamed, some of which have never had a boat on them, and have not had 200lbs. of fish taken from them. This more especially of the bass lake or the Presque Isle Chain, which are Lake Superior waters. We were on the head of the divide between Lake Superior and Mississippi waters, and between the Wisconsin and Chippewa River systems. The latter streams both flow into the Mississippi, and so their tributary waters carry muscallonge. Only Mississippi waters carry 'lunge, and north of the divide that fish is not found. Winding in and around the little known country lying at the very head of these water systems, in the highest part of Wisconsin and probably in the best fur country of the State, we now had 120 miles of traps to run on the total of the lines. To cover this each week in the depth of a Wisconsin winter (where the thermometer had been 80° below that month) was no light task for three men.

The Season's Catch.

The total product of the lines up to the time of our arrival (about Feb. 15) had been 7 lynx, 5 otter, 65 marten, 7 fox, 4 fisher, 40 mink, 700 muskrats (the latter taken in the earlier fall by boat trapping). Our trappers thought the season was nearly over, but believed they would clean up about $500 on their winter's work. I must say I thought they had earned it. In following chapters we shall perhaps see further into the life and methods of the modern fur trapper by continuing the actual story of our trip. E. Hough.

909 Security Building, Chicago.

Natural History.

WHY ARE THERE SO FEW BLUEBIRDS?

BY MRS. LOUISE M. STEPHENSON, HELENA, ARK.

[A paper read before the American Ornithologists' Union.]

Through nine years' observation of birds in this region—Helena, Ark.—it is safe to say there have been few sunny days, even in winter, in which one or more bluebirds have not been seen in my neighborhood. The year 1894-95 was no exception to the rule, and all went well with them until Jan. 28. That morning, while the snow was falling fast, four bluebirds were seen taking shelter in a martin house close to our windows. As the storm did not continue long and the sun shone at intervals next day, it was believed they had flown further south as soon as it ceased snowing. The weather, which was continuously cold for twenty-three days (a very unusual period here), moderated greatly after that, and as the owners of the little house might be looked for at any moment, it was taken down Feb. 28 for some needed repairs, and there were the four bluebirds, frozen to death.

With such evidence at hand, inquiry as to the number of dead birds found after the storm was instituted, and the answers though few were alarming, inasmuch as they showed what the effect had been on much hardier species than *Sialia sialis*. These, with replies to questioning letters sent later, and other material of the same character, form, when collected together, interesting though melancholy data. Feeling certain of this, and that my correspondents would not object to so proper a use of their reports, I take the liberty of submitting them in full; all were written in 1895.

Lagrange, Ark., April 1.—In answer to the inquiry about dead birds, I have to report the death of a great many bluebirds, and I would like to say that in my opinion the lessening number every year is from two causes, the severity of our recent winters and the ceaseless war made upon them by the English sparrows.—Moses Burke.

Helena, Ark., March 15.—In answer to the request of March 12, I would say that one of my neighbors found a dead yellowhammer and two sparrows; another a robin, and still another two bluejays and two unknown gray birds, all evidently frozen to death.

Old Orchard, Mo., March 22.—With the exception of ducks and blackbirds, birds generally are still scarce. The most extraordinary feature is the almost total absence of bluebirds and robins from their breeding places. There are some troops of robins present, and once in a while we hear the carol of a bluebird; but they seem to be strangers, and only here in transit. Our robins and bluebirds are not with us yet, and the question arises, will they come or are they all dead? Did they get killed or only chilled? It is most unusual for them to stay away so long. The weather here is not unusually cold. It is not forward, like last year, but we cannot yet call it unusually backward.—Otto Widmann.

Old Orchard, Mo., April 3.—Unfortunately our bluebirds have not yet come. The carol of this loveliest of early spring birds used to be heard everywhere. This year it is a rare treat. On the 27th ult. I went to Dardenne, forty-three miles north of St. Louis, and came back on the 29th. On this trip I did not see or hear a single one. On the 30th I went to Creve Cœur Lake and heard one during the whole afternoon, and in a region where I used to hear a dozen. It may be some will come yet, but I doubt it.

May 7.—Bluebirds are still scare in the neighborhood of Old Orchard.—Otto Widwann.

Mexico, Mo, April 20.—I am impressed with the almost total absence of the bluebird from my region this spring. I have seen none and heard of only a few. This absence extends well over my county, as I have heard from inquiry. Have written North, and now ask you about them.—J. N. Baskett.

Rockford, Ill., April 21.—I have not seen or heard a single specimen of the bluebird since the middle of January (previous to our extreme cold). To-day I took a long tramp afield on purpose to find one, but was disappointed. I can hardly think that it was the extreme weather that destroyed them, as they are quite hardy little fellows. It is not uncommon to see one or two here off and on through the winter.—J. E. Dickinson.

West Chester, Pa., April 22.—I have not noticed any unusual diminution in the number of bluebirds in this immediate vicinity. At best they cannot be called a *common* bird here of late years, and we do not often see them during the winter months, unless the weather be mild. This winter, though severe in parts, was not an abnormally cold one with us, and I don't think our winter residents suffered from it to an unusual extent.—Thomas Jackson.

Stanfordville, N. Y., April 25.—The bluebirds do not winter here, as I presume you know. I have never seen them really abundant in my vicinity, but this spring they certainly are scarcer. The first one arrived March 11, and since then I have occasionally seen a few stragglers, or heard their voices in the distance; little companies of four or five taking the place of the flocks of eight or ten of previous years.—Mary Hyatt.

Manchester, Iowa, April 27.—One pair of bluebirds only, as far as heard from, has been seen in this vicinity —I have seen none—where pairs other years have come with the robins. Our birds came late this year. How account for the missing bluebirds?—Mrs. Mary L. Rann.

Orangeville, Mich., June 6.—Due inquiry has been made in regard to the bluebird, and all are positive that they have decreased sadly. Mr. Townsend, who is out in the woods and about his farm continually, says he has looked for them the past ten days, and has not seen one. I saw one pair here a month or six weeks ago. The robins are not as plentiful as formerly either.—Eli Nichols.

Lacon, Ill., June 6.—This spring I doubt if there is a bluebird in our country. They were very plentiful here in years gone by. Do not know why they are not here now, unless the English sparrows have driven them away.—Mrs. Mary I. Barnes.

Easthampton, Mass., June, 11.—I am sorry to say that we too have missed nearly all our bluebirds this spring. I know of but one pair nesting here, and have seen very few. In fact all our birds, with one or two exceptions, have fallen off in numbers this year. The bluebirds do not winter here, but the cold weather extended so far south this winter that many species must have suffered. We have some faint idea this season what spring would be without birds.—Mary E. Bruce.

San Antonio, Texas, June 10.—I have been looking up my notes and those of my acquaintances in regard to the bluebird. The species is a common spring and fall migrant and breeds north and east of here. Contrary to the bulk of the notes I have lately noticed, I have found the bluebird fully as common this year as any other. I have found them breeding in March in the heavily timbered country east of San Antonio, and have reliable information that they were as numerous as usual in the hills northwest of here. From what I have noted it seems to me that more bluebirds than usual remained to breed in this part of Texas this year.

The snow of Feb. 14-16 did not affect any of the birds of this locality, as far as I was able to judge, although snow is itself a rare winter visitant. I trust the bluebirds will be found before long. I cannot imagine how a species so numerous could be utterly blotted out. One unusual occurrence this year was the late leave-taking of the robins, which were here in countless thousands throughout the winter. My last note reads: "April 20, six robins seen in San Pedro Springs—will any remain to breed?" Whether this was due to the very cold weather I am not prepared to say.—Arthur H. W. Norton.

Kalamazoo, Mich., Oct. 26.—In latter part of March, 1895, observed one bluebird; only one was seen or heard during spring of 1895, and they are very abundant here generally. In late May took a fifty-nine miles buggy ride through a territory just suited to them and where they are generally common, and did not see one. In the first week in October, 1895, a friend (reliable) reported a flock of forty bluebirds. Could hardly believe him. I rode out with him about the middle of month and saw nine old and immature bluebirds at side of road. About Oct. 20 I saw a dozen old and immature bluebirds. These flocks were all migrants.—*From Notes made by Dr. Morris Gibbs.*

Old Orchard, Mo., Oct. 30.—As regards our friend Blueback I have good news. From about the middle of September to the middle of October I had the great pleasure of meeting small troops of six to twelve bluebirds, families probably in different parts of St. Louis county and in St. Charles county, and the dear old call of wandering bluebirds was almost daily in the air. This shows that not all hope is gone, though it may take many years before they become as plentiful as before. In traveling through the country I used to see numbers of bluebirds along the railroad lines, but this year all the way from St. Louis to Boston, via Cleveland, Buffalo and Albany, I did not see a single one, either going (in August) or returning (in September).—Otto Widmann.

This closes the correspondence. What follows has been clipped, as indicated, from different newspapers:

Not a bluebird has been seen in Taliaferro county this year, according to the *Savannah Press*. Possibly they have been ousted by the jaybirds, who mistook this county for their regular Friday assembling place.—*Rome Tribune.*

A gentleman from London, Canada, visiting Boston, reports that there, too, the bluebirds have entirely failed to appear this spring. It would be comforting to know for certain if it is the cold that has killed these shy, delicate little companions of man. Undoubtedly this is so. The gentleman just mentioned says his grounds were full of half-frozen crows one week, so torpid and miserable that they could be taken up by the hand.—*Boston Transcript.*

One of the curators of the Smithsonian Institution, who makes special provision for birds on his suburban place, picked up seven dead bluebirds on his grounds after the blizzard last February, and found fourteen more dead in a bird house. He has not seen a living bluebird this year. The shooting of birds this season will nearly amount to extermination.—*St. Louis Globe-Democrat, June 5.*

Rev. T. F. Cargill, of Fulton county, Arkansas, cut down a hollow tree one day last week and found a number of dead bluebirds in it. He thinks they froze to death.—*Stuttgart (Ark.) Free Press.*

I write, and with regret, to record the fact not generally known, that in consequence of the protracted cold winter the beautiful little bluebirds were exterminated. Being insectivorous, their natural food was not to be had during the long cold spell and starvation was their sad fate. Not one is left in all this country to propagate the species. The habits of birds, like those of man, are marked by zones; hence I fear we will never know the beautiful little bird again.—*W. T. Hollis in Pine Bluff (Ark.) Commercial.*

I have not done as much collecting this season as in former ones, but have been around the country considerably and have failed to see a single pair of bluebirds nesting—something very unusual for these parts, as they are one of our most common birds, or at least have been in former years. I am in hopes our good oölogists will spare what few are left for a few years until they can be heard again in the latter part of March, singing their mournful chirp high up in the air when the ground is covered with snow.—*Almon E. Kibbe, Mayville, N. Y., Aug. 2, in the Nideologist.*

Returning to my own district. Two pairs of bluebirds nested within two miles of the city this season, but of more than that the most diligent inquiry has brought no evidence. The morning of Oct. 28 a friend telephoned: "Six bluebirds in my neighborhood.' Since his observation has been the same as my own up to the present, and these remained near him only a few moments, they were

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