

and pronounced young of the year. We were unable to purchase them from the sailors.— HAROLD H. BAILEY, *Newport News, Va.*

**Two Ornithological Fables from Louisiana.**— While in Avoyelles Parish, La., recently, the writer heard two interesting bird stories. One concerns the Wood Ibis (*Mycteria americana*). A man told me: "I have heard from my father, and my grandfather, and have heard all my life, that a flock of these birds will alight in shallow water and set to scratching their heads. After all have been doing this a short time, the fish in the place rise and float on the surface stupefied, thus falling an easy prey to the birds."

Although this tale is a great tax upon credulity the writer gave it the benefit of the doubt to the extent of testing the fundamental assertion scientifically. Some minnows were kept in a small aquarium with a good quantity of scaly scurf from the head and neck of a Wood Ibis. The minnows showed no signs of discomfort (during 24 hours) and in fact ate some of the scales. A friend has suggested that if there is anything at all in the story, the probability is that scales being scratched off might attract small fishes in search of food.

The other fable, admittedly a morality tale,<sup>1</sup> I have put in the following form: It is related that one day of the days a dove espied an ant struggling in the water. Moved to compassion, the dove plucked a leaf and laid it on the water near to the ant. The ant climbing thereon was saved from drowning and a favorable breeze springing up, was wafted to shore and his hold on life made sure. At a later time, the dove sitting quietly on a branch of a tree, was drowsily enjoying the beauty of the day. A wicked boy, gun in hand, stealthily approached, and having taken deliberate aim was about to fire. In this extremity the ant, witnessing the turn of events, quickly climbed to the boy's neck and, ere he could pull trigger bit him shrewdly on the ear. The lad disconcerted by the sharp pain, let fall his gun, and with an exclamation, roughly brushed his hurt. All this hubbub aroused the dove who made off in safety.

Moral: Befriend, and you may be befriended.— W. L. MCATEE, *Washington, D. C.*

---

<sup>1</sup> This evidently old story appears in a different guise in the 'Marvels of Ant Life.' W. F. Kirby, 1898.