MEMORIAL

EDWARD ALEXANDER PREBLE

The family of EDWARD ALEXANDER PREBLE in America stems from Abraham Preble who came to Scituate, Massachusetts, in 1636. In time he became a member of the general court of Maine, one of the treasurers of the colony, and also its chief military officer. Some of his descendants were prominent in civil, army, and navy positions, the most famous being Commodore Edward Preble (1761–1807), who commanded the force that did away with the Barbary pirate troubles and received the thanks of Congress. Our Preble descended from a brother of the Commodore, his parents being Edward Perkins, and Marcia Alexander, Preble. Edward Alexander Preble, our subject, referred to John Evelyn (1620–1706), English diarist, also as one of his ancestry.

Preble was born in Somerville, Massachusetts, 11 June 1871, but during the next year the family moved to Wilmington in the same state. Lifelong evidence proved that he was a born naturalist. In youth, he learned all that he could of his home range and its animals and plants. He attended high school at Woburn, four miles distant. Walking to and fro not only built him up physically, but provided opportunity for continued nature study, from which he learned more than he did in the classrooms.

Two biographers, one of them his younger daughter, Evelyn Morgan Walter, inform us concerning the books to which Preble had access in early years. They included a nearly complete file of *Harper's Magazine, Wake Robin* by John Burroughs, *Birds of the Colorado Valley* by Elliott Coues, and *Birds of New England* by Edward Augustus Samuels (Walter and Hannah, 1932).

He had the good fortune to become acquainted with Frank Blake Webster (1850–1921), publisher of *The Ornithologist and Oologist,* collector, taxidermist, and dealer in naturalists' supplies. No better contact could have been made by a young biologist, and Preble himself records that "Some of the pleasantest recollections of my boyhood are concerned with visits to his establishment [at Hyde Park, Massachusetts], where I sometimes assisted him in arranging eggs or skins" (1923: 196). He was also able to make occasional visits to the showrooms of the Boston Society of Natural History.

The high school years were 1886–1889, but there was to be no college education. He worked for eight months for a plumbing supply store in Boston, but could not endure city life and returned home. However, a new way soon opened, and we have Preble's own words as to how it came about through Frank H. Hitchcock (1867–1935), best known as having been United States Postmaster General, 1909–1913. Preble says, "I first met Hitchcock in early September, 1891 . . . . We had a bird-hunt or two together in the woods in Wilmington, but further association at that time was prevented by his appointment to a position in Washington, D.C., in November of that year. He had not been long in Washington when he called at the offices of the Division of Ornithology and Mammalogy at the Department of Agriculture, and soon joined the staff under C. Hart Merriam. The next spring, Hitchcock's brief acquaintance with me led to my own appointment in the Bureau where so many years have been spent" (1935: 490).

His period of service began 1 April 1892. The first field work, by way of training, was with Vernon Bailey in Texas. He had other assignments to collecting and study in Georgia, western Maryland, Oregon, Washington, and Utah. These were evidently life-zone samplings, leading toward the principal explorations of his career, which are set forth more fully later.

With respect to the founder and first Chief of the Biological Survey, C. Hart

Merriam, Preble wrote me in a letter on 1 August 1946 "I have always been grateful to him and very friendly to him to the last for his overlooking the failings of a totally untrained country boy, and the confidence he put in me by assigning me to the exploration of N. Canada and for allowing the publication of the rather bulky Fauna 27."

In the summer of 1900, accompanied by a younger brother, Alfred Emerson Preble, he was in the Hudson Bay region, field work beginning at the northern end of Lake Winnipeg on 17 June and continuing in the Nelson and Hayes river valleys to York Factory, thence along the bay to Fort Churchill. While his brother spent a period there, E. A. Preble made a reconnaissance northward into the Barren Grounds. After that they returned by practically the reverse of their outgoing route, reaching Norway House, their starting point, on 16 September. This travel was by canoe and on foot and covered about 1,200 miles. In North American Fauna No. 22 (1902) Preble describes the territory traversed, summarizes previous explorations, reveals the life-zone findings, lists the mammals (including two species and seven subspecies described as new), birds (256 species), and batrachians, and presents a thoroughgoing bibliography.

His next and greatest biological investigation comprised three summer trips with companions, and one winter and one summer without, in the Athabaska-Mackenzie region. On 30 April 1901, again with his brother, he left Edmonton, Alberta, and proceeded via the Athabaska and Slave rivers to Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake. Thence he crossed the lake and reached Fort Rae at the end of its northernmost arm. They returned, mostly by steamer and Hudson's Bay Company scows, reaching Edmonton 4 September.

In 1903, the same brother and Merritt Cary, a newcomer to the Biological Survey, accompanied him. They travelled the above-outlined route to Fort Resolution, whence the two younger men worked down the Mackenzie River to Fort Simpson. E. A. Preble took a separate course, reaching Great Bear Lake by way of Fort Rae, and descending Great Bear River to Fort Norman on the Mackenzie. He was now downstream from his helpers. The latter started their return trip on 22 July, and reached Edmonton on 2 September. E. A. Preble worked upstream from Fort Norman to Fort Simpson, where he spent the winter, October 1903 to June 1904. He was busy with the fauna and flora, of course, and with working up his notes, and although trying, it was a unique and educational experience. From Fort Simpson he made a voyage down the Mackenzie, leaving 1 June and going to Fort McPherson on Peel River. He started on the long trip home 16 July and reached Edmonton 4 September.

His report (Fauna 27, 1908), still the very best of that series, discusses the physical geography and climatology of the Athabaska-Mackenzie region, summarizes previous explorations (1770–1907), outlines the routes of the Biological Survey parties, and lists the mammals (including one new subspecies), birds (278 species), reptiles, batrachians, fishes,* trees, and shrubs. There is another comprehensive bibliography, and with its 574 pages this Fauna is truly a monumental work.

At Edmonton, on one of these trips, Preble attended a Peace Treaty dinner, sitting next to an Indian Chief. Being fresh from active field work, he did full justice to the meal. Called on for remarks, he obliged briefly, ending by complimenting the dinner, and saying "I'm as well satisfied with these few mouthfuls as if I had eaten a hearty meal." As he was seated, the old Indian commented, "Yes, them few mouthfuls you et would keep some families a week."

* It should be recorded that this list is not what it might have been because a considerable part of his collection of fishes, obtained and brought out with such devotion and great labor, was lost in the U.S. National Museum.

Another food anecdote began with a graver setting. Preble and two companions, starved, or nearly so, for days, finally shot a caribou. They stopped right there, made a fire, cut up and cooked the animal, and consumed all of it before they left the spot. "Caribou," Preble observed as he told me this, "is not strong meat." Neither, he added at another time, is snowshoe hare. But he commended whitefish as being nutritious food, of which one did not readily tire.

A later expedition, the results of which were not worked into North American Fauna 27, is thus introduced: "In the summer of 1907, Ernest Thompson Seton, accompanied by Edward A. Preble, made a canoe trip to the Barren Grounds about Aylmer Lake" (1908: 85)—a region to the northeast of Great Slave Lake. They left Athabaska landing 18 May and returned there 1 November. In the account of this trip, with no further mention of himself, Preble wrote "Seton went here, or there" but, of course, the success, yes, the very possibility of the voyage rested upon his very capable self. A list of the birds seen was published in *The Auk* for January, 1908, by Seton.

Probably out of deference to Seton's wishes, Preble seems to have scrupulously avoided including in Fauna 27 any of the personal notes or records that he secured on the 1907 trip. In any event, he subsequently presented these records pretty adequately in several appendices to *The Arctic Prairies,* which were largely of his authorship.

In mere asides in later years, he said, "Seton saw lots of things I didn't see" (in other words, imagined them). And, "I travelled some 2,000 miles in Canada, Seton on the front, I on the rear end of a canoe, and while he had lots of adventures, I had none."

On one occasion, a lynx was sighted, which Seton wished to photograph. It dashed across the open shore of Great Slave Lake toward the woods. "Now," writes Seton, "I saw the incredible wonder I had heard of—a good runner can outrun a Lynx. Preble was a sprinter, and before the timber 200 yards off was reached that Lynx was headed and turned." Seton approached the animal at bay and said, "Now, Preble, I'm going to walk up to that lynx and get a close photo. If he jumps for me . . . nothing can save my beauty but you and that gun. Preble with characteristic loquacity says, 'Go ahead' " (*The Arctic Prairies,* 1911: 191). A somewhat similar encounter with a wounded bull musk-ox is described on pages 232–233 of the same book.

Near the end of the journey came their first serious accident, which Preble himself may have regarded as an adventure, although I never heard him mention it. In rapids of the Canyon of the Athabaska, a canoe was dashed on a rock. "In a moment Preble and I," recounts Seton, "and all the stuff were in the water. 'My journals' I shouted as I went down . . . [and again as I] struck out for the shore. Now I saw Preble hanging on to the canoe and trying to right it. His face was calm and unchanged as when setting a mouse-trap" (p. 289). A little later, "A glance showed Preble in shallow water coolly hauling in the canoe." Practically all of their equipment was later picked, or dredged, up, and Seton says: "I learned that day I had three of the best men that ever boarded a boat" (p. 290).*

In 1910 Preble made a trip about which my sole informants are the Mixter brothers, sons of a famous surgeon of the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, who were his companions. Samuel Mixter writes me that the expedition was from Wrangell, Alaska, up the Stikine River to Telegraph Creek, across to Fort Grahame, down the

* Francis Harper says that Elzear Robillard, one of the men on the towline, told him that the upset was altogether Seton's fault. And it may well be added that on his 1920 expedition in the Athabaska region, Harper wrote to Preble: "I am all the time meeting somebody who grins and says, 'I know Preble.' "

Peace River, and thence to Edmonton, Alberta. He adds: "I went only five or six days east of Telegraph Creek and then, by previous arrangement, returned via Wrangell" (letter of 27 March 1961).

George Mixter, the second brother, kindly informs me: "Our principal objective was to determine the boundary between the Stone sheep [*Ovis dalli stonei*] of the Pacific slopes, and the Canadian sheep [*Ovis canadensis canadensis*] of the eastern slopes, of the Rockies.

"Unfortunately we ran into very difficult going due to the fact that the forest along the entire length of the Ingenika River was either burning or recently burned—a matter of about 100 miles. We had planned to live off the country but, of course, all animal life was destroyed and we were so slowed down that our emergency rations gave out. Because of this, we were unable to explore the high mountains to the north in our crossing of the Continental Divide where the two species might have approached one another. We had . . . selected the lowest pass we could find and the terrain was . . . [a] long flat plateau . . . not suitable for sheep. If there was any interbreeding, we were unable to prove it.

"As to Preble, himself, I have only the highest tribute to pay. We lived a difficult life with many discomforts but in the more than three months we were thrown together so intimately, he never failed to be a wise and pleasant companion. He was a great explorer and I have no doubt that the expedition would have had a much less happy ending without him" (letter of 18 April 1961). In turn, Preble referred to George Mixter as "one of the best camp friends, I ever saw" (letter of May 1944).

In 1911 agitation was rife as to the status and need for control of the Yellowstone elk that annually migrated for the winter to the Jackson Hole country of Wyoming. Preble was sent to investigate, and he made a report that was published as Bulletin 40 of the Biological Survey (1911). This dealt with the food habits of the elk, their movements as affected by the availability of food, and their relation to livestock; and made suggestions as to management of the herd.

In 1913 Preble went to Boston where he met Charles Robert Cross, lawyer, with whom he was to make another expedition to British Columbia. He took the opportunity to visit his old home at Wilmington, Massachusetts, and on 11 July set out with Mr. Cross on the transcontinental trip. At Vancouver, B.C., arrangements were made for collecting permits. Their route was to Prince Rupert and up the Skeena River to Hazelton, where they completed their outfitting. Actual camp life began on 1 August and ended 22 October. Explorations were made in the upper Skeena and Nass river countries. The return trip began on 26 October, bringing them back to their eastern points of departure in early November. This was apparently a big-game hunt, probably with mountain sheep as the chief objective. Rather full notes on birds were made, and some miscellaneous collecting was done.

In 1914 he was sent with Wilfred H. Osgood, a former colleague in the Biological Survey, but then of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, and George H. Parker, Professor of Zoology in Harvard University, as a Federal Commission to study and report upon the fur seals of the Pribilof Islands. He was on furlough from the Biological Survey for this work from June 1914 to January 1915. The report of this group (Osgood, Preble, and Parker, 1915) laid the basis for management of the fur seal herd that has prevailed to this day.

The opportunity that this trip afforded for general study of the fauna of the islands was not neglected, and Preble wrote in introductory pages of North American Fauna No. 46 (1923), entitled "A Biological Investigation of the Pribilof Islands":

"It is needless to state that the extremely interesting wealth of bird life on these islands, then for the first time observed by this writer, determined him to prepare a fully annotated list of birds" (p. 4). In this Fauna, Preble summarized the observations of 16 other zoologists (1860–1917), discussed life-zone relationships, gave annotated lists of the mammals and birds (137 species), and presented his usual comprehensive bibliography. There was also a report on insects, arachnids, and chilopods in chapters by 12 additional authors.

Preble was called upon in 1934 for comments on another serious conservation problem—the alarming decrease in game waterfowl. To get up-to-date information, he spent about a month in the Athabaska and Peace river deltas, with Luther J. Goldman as assistant. In reporting, he drew not only upon the results of this examination, but also upon his own field work and that of Francis Harper, J. Alden Loring, and Hamilton J. Laing in 1920, and of various companions in the northern explorations alluded to in previous pages of this memorial. His conclusions were that waterfowl were not more than 40 per cent as numerous as they had been 30 years previously, that 85 per cent of North American waterfowl are produced in Canada and Alaska, and that 75 per cent of the annual bags are shot in the United States (manuscript report). He urged a series of closed seasons to permit recuperation of the stocks. "But, politics, aye, there's the rub," he was forced to conclude. "Commercialism and sport are akin and both . . . are served by politics; this fact almost boils down the cause of duck diminution to one factor" (letter of 12 November 1937, to Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture).

Preble's publications on ornithology, aside from those in the North American Fauna series, included one on "The Summer Birds of Western Maryland" (1900) in which 100 species were recorded. An accompanying paper on the life zones by C. Hart Merriam was based on field work by Preble and Vernon Bailey. He had also three notes, one review, and three obituaries in *The Auk,* one of the latter (1922) being of Roderick Ross MacFarlane of the Hudson's Bay Company. He published also one obituary, that of Frank Blake Webster, in the *Journal of Mammalogy* (1923).

In his prime, Preble was an active and a powerful man. His brother, Alfred E. Preble, who was with him on three northern trips, set strength records at Tufts College in 1903 and 1904. They must have been an impressive pair, even among the tough and strenuous Canadian voyageurs. Seton, in reminiscences of the Aylmer Lake exploration, notes that the packages carried on portages weighed from 200 to 250 pounds, and Preble, "although not supposed to do it," shouldered such loads every time (1911: 202). Earlier in the same book (p. 153) he recorded: "During our stay at Fort Smith we had several athletic meets of Indians and whites, the latter represented by Preble and the police boys, and no matter whether in running, walking, high jumping, broad jumping, wrestling, or boxing, the whites were ahead."

In the Biological Survey, Preble was exposed to systematic zoology, but the inoculation did not take as thoroughly as with some of the others. He had only one systematic paper among the North American Faunas and only a few elsewhere. This contribution was, "A Revision of the Jumping Mice of the Genus Zapus" (15, 1899). He may have been attracted to this group because it is largely northern. The first American mouse in it was recorded by Thomas Pennant as the "Long-legged Mouse of Hudson's Bay." In this treatment, Preble described new forms in all ranks and divided the group into three subgenera, one extralimital.

Although he was chairman of the Editorial Committee of the *Journal of Mammalogy* (Vols. 11–16, 1930–1935), it probably was unfair that he was regarded as primarily a

mammalogist. Certainly A. K. Fisher and I thought so, and we tried to bring others to agree, with the result that, belatedly, in 1935, Preble was elected Fellow in the American Ornithologists' Union. When I told him of the election, he commented, "I thought the age of miracles was past."

After his Fauna-making days were over, Preble turned his attention more and more to the conservation of wildlife. At that time our second-in-command, Walter C. Henderson, also was an earnest conservationist. In a reminiscent letter of 10 December 1947, Preble says: "I helped him write a lot of his speeches. By keeping closely to a set pattern of procedure, I think that the Bureau was really making some progress." As to one of those addresses, Mr. Henderson stated (in a letter of 15 September 1946) that he had the advice of Preble, McAtee, and William T. Hornaday, and went on to record that, "So far as I know my Boston Speech in January 1930 was the first public statement by the Biological Survey that too many waterfowl had been taken by the hunters and the annual kill must be curtailed if the birds were to be preserved." He alluded to those days in several letters to me, from another one of which I quote: ". . . the early thirties when you, Preble, the Colonel [Harold P. Sheldon], and I were working together to save the waterfowl. We were not exactly popular with some of the less thoughtful hunters, but I cannot help believing that there are now more ducks and geese in the country today because of that help." That was written 6 January 1944, and how it applies to the situation today may be appraised for himself by each knowledgeable reader.

Among other conservation services, Preble was on the Committee on Wildlife of the Division of Biology and Agriculture of the National Research Council; and for some years he was one of the judges in a contest for humane trap designs held by the American Humane Association.

I suppose that my acquaintance with Preble grew mostly on bird trips in the District of Columbia region. He was absent in the North during the summers of 1903 and 1904—my first with the Biological Survey, but apparently we got to the point of making a spring bird count together in 1906. (This has been recorded as in 1907 (McAtee, 1921 [1922]), but that must be a mistake as Preble was on the Seton expedition in that year.) At any rate it was on 15 May, usually considered the date of the height of migration in that locality, and it was a daylight-to-dark affair. I called at Preble's house (then and for life, 3027 Newark St., N.W., Washington, D.C.), and we took in that neighborhood, then known as Cleveland Park, and went on to Piney Branch, Rock Creek, Chevy Chase, Glen Echo, Georgetown, and across the Potomac to Roslyn and Four-Mile Run.

Before normal lunch time, my appetite began to stir, and I asked Preble what he had for breakfast. "Eggs," was the reply. "Well," I said, "I had eggs, too, but wouldn't know it now." "How many did you have?" "Two." "Huh," snorted Preble, "when I eat eggs, I never think of taking less than six."

Our trip wore on, and we did fairly well, seeing 83 species. Preble poked his hand into all accessible tree cavities, hoping to get a Screech Owl. He had no luck and grumbled, "Hasbrouck collected all the Screech Owls." (Edwin M. Hasbrouck published his studies on *Megascops* in 1893.) Dusk approaching when we were on Four-Mile Run Hill, Preble had one more thought as to adding a species. "Red-shouldered Hawks have nested here for years," said he. "Let's find the nest and see whether there's anything in it." The nest was located, and Preble urged me to climb up to it. I was too tired to be enthusiastic in that respect, but climb I did, only to find an empty nest.

Measuring our route on a map the next day, we concluded that we had covered about 32 miles. Although the first, it was the longest of our bird trips, and I have sometimes wondered whether it wasn't a sort of initiation, or test, for me, on Preble's part, with climbing to a hawk's nest as a final unexpected fillip.

From 1906 to 1921 (McAtee, 1921 [1922]) Preble and McAtee were on seven spring bird trips together (sometimes with another observer—A. K. Fisher on three of them), and achieved the 100-species goal once—in 1919. It is certain that we made similar trips after 1921, but the records are now inaccessible. Of Christmas bird counts, we made and reported upon in print 17 during the period 1912 (*Bird-Lore,* 1913) to 1929 (*Bird-Lore,* 1930). Alexander Wetmore was on most of these after 1916, and McAtee, Preble, and Wetmore wrote up an additional trip for that year (*Wilson Bulletin,* 1917). The reason was an exceptionally good list of 48 species; we even topped that by the "magic" number, 50, in 1926.

Ornithologists may relish the retelling of Frank M. Chapman's editorial treatment of the English Sparrow in *Bird-Lore,* where the Christmas bird counts were published. He banned mention of that species for years. If that was because it was supposedly so ubiquitous as to be on every list, our experience did not support it. On our jaunts in the Dogue Creek, Virginia, area, we were not likely to see the English Sparrow, unless by poking about, and even in, a large barn on Woodlawn Estate. Later Chapman relented to permit "also English Sparrow" to be tacked on the end of a list, but not included in the count. "The Soldiers Three," chaffing at this treatment in one report (1925), entered: "Also Sushkin's English Weaver Bird," but even that did not change F. M. C.'s rule in our time. It was Peter Petrovich Sushkin (1868–1928) who pointed out that the so-called English Sparrow should be placed among the Ploceidae or weaver-finches.

If I may record only one incident from all those trips, it is that of a Tufted Titmouse alighting on, and pecking, Preble's hand as he held it to his lips in "squeaking." It may be noted that Preble (and A. K. Fisher as well) could not hear the higher-pitched bird notes, as those of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, but heard the drumming of the Ruffed Grouse when it had to be called to my attention. In other words our sound-perception ranges were different. Both of these observers were exceptionally alert to any movement that might indicate the presence of a bird.

We made other trips that were not primarily birding, but just general outdoor rambles for the exercise and any experiences that might arise. One cross-country jaunt taken several times was from Manassas, Virginia, where we left one railway train, and Woodbridge on Occoquan Creek, where we boarded another. This route was about 22 miles. On one slushy, slippery, winter day, we had to push much of the way and barely got to our destination by train time. On another and far more pleasant occasion, upon reaching Woodbridge, we found that we had an hour or so to wait for the train. Rather than den up in the stuffy little station, we proceeded to the front fence of a nearby estate to take our ease under some fine shade trees. We had not been there long when a man appeared, following the fence row, and evidently bent on "firing" us. He came rapidly and determinedly at first, but then seeing our occupations, more slowly and doubtfully. Wetmore was reading a *National Geographic Magazine;* I was studying an insect with a hand lens; and Preble had improvised something appropriate to a dignified scientist. The man finally came to a halt, greetings were exchanged, and we told him who we were. All was soon well, and he invited us to inspect the barns and other equipment of what proved to be one of the largest dairy farms supplying Washington. We marvelled at the

employe's recognizing individual cows of a rather uniform breed, calling them by name; and at the cows each going to its own place in the long row of stanchions. After the inspection, we were invited into the mansion and were served strawberry shortcake, cream, and milk, all at their best.

No member of the Biological Survey, knowing birds, and capable of making field trips, could escape drafting by Wells W. Cooke, the migration specialist, to lead classes organized by the District of Columbia Audubon Society for both indoor and outdoor study of birds; and Preble had his share in these activities.

One of Preble's greatest services was the editing of papers written by other members of the Division of Biological Investigations of the Biological Survey. No trouble was too great for him to undertake in this work. Trips to libraries to verify references, or to the National Museum to see specimens, and involving much walking, were made as a matter of course. Not only his thoroughness, but also his comprehensive knowledge of the subjects and of the literature, made him the man for the job. One of the chief beneficiaries of this editing—Vernon Bailey—has publicly acknowledged the aid (1939). In one paragraph he says, "We . . . felt safer when Preble went over our manuscripts . . . and I welcome this opportunity to express my own obligations for such help,—always cheerfully given even if his own work suffered by delay."

Preble's editorial help was recognized also by Joseph Burr Tyrrell, Canadian geologist (1858–1957), with respect to old journals that he prepared for publication by the Champlain Society of Toronto. They included Samuel Hearne's *A Journey from Prince of Wales' Fort in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean . . . in* 1769 . . . 1772" (1911); and David Thompson's *Narrative of his Explorations in Western America 1784–1812* (1916). Tyrrell states that Preble's annotations on the animals and plants added greatly to the scientific value of these volumes.

Explicit records of his editorial aid are also in *Lives of Game Animals* (4 vols. 1927) by E. T. Seton. One of them is "Especial thanks are due . . . to Edward A. Preble for revision of several chapters and for many valuable suggestions" (Vol. 3, p. v).

Preble was able to render editorial service, even to his seniors, as in the instances cited, because he was broadly and deeply educated. Education is an individual process, and although he went only through high school in our institutional system, he made up for it by close study of everything in nature, by attentive reading in all fields of his interest, by accurate note taking especially in bibliography, and by habitual reflection.

His editorial experience made him receptive, if it did not lead more directly, to the work of the last quarter of his life. That was as Associate Editor of *Nature Magazine,* which he took up immediately after retirement from the government service in June, 1935.* A motive not at all concealed was his desire to get away from official restrictions that kept him from speaking out freely and forcefully on conservation. Some of his contributions to *Nature Magazine* were signed or initialed, but others were not, and we may never be able to identify all of them.

A letter of 13 March 1935 from Richard W. Westwood, Editor of *Nature Magazine,* makes it clear that Preble was working for the magazine then (*i.e.,* previous to his retirement). Just what the arrangement was, I do not know, but it is certain that he engaged in full-time work immediately after retirement on 30 June of that year.

* On this occasion through contributions of friends he was presented with sets of the best editions of the works of Henry David Thoreau, John Burroughs, and John Muir, and a beautiful case to hold them; as well as an appreciations book. The portrait accompanying this memorial was taken at the time by a representative of *The Washington Evening Star.*

Edward Alexander Preble

His duties were to make recommendations on manuscripts to the editor; check them for accuracy and otherwise edit them, if accepted; answer inquiries on natural history topics; and, when the spirit moved, write fillers, other articles, and editorials. He shared also in the proofreading, and my experience with *Nature Magazine* proof of scores of articles was that it was nearly always perfect. The annual and decennial indexes of this magazine in his period of service were also his painstaking work.

The staff came to believe that "What Mr. Preble doesn't know he knows how to find out" (Walter and Hannah, 1932). One of his ways of finding out was visiting naturalists, in fact authorities in every needed line, in Washington, and discussing manuscripts with the view of insuring their accuracy. This required a good deal of legwork, which, although readily done in earlier years with the *Magazine,* later became a burden and even an impossibility, as his powers failed. Although urged by friends to retire, he would not do so, and in fact held the job and was named on the masthead to the end, although he had been unable to do any of the usual chores for nearly a year (R. W. Westwood, letter of 23 January 1957). For a general impression, by Editor Westwood, see "Edward A. Preble—An Appreciation" in *Nature Magazine* for December 1957.

In the 1920's Preble bought a tract of hilly land, including a section of Bullneck Run, a tributary of the Potomac River below Difficult Run, in Fairfax County, Virginia. Here he built a small shack, did some gardening, and wandered about in the woodland. However, he had never forgotten his grandmother's farm in Ossipee, New Hampshire, in the foothills of the White Mountains, where the family (or as many of them as could make it) went in his youthtime for summer vacations. This land came to be the best loved of all, and in 1948 he wrote: "Now, nearly a lifetime later, by inheritance and certain other circumstances, I find myself in possession of the old farm and parts of several adjoining ones, all of whose terrain I seem always to have known, and whose changing aspects since early times seem a part of my heritage" (1948: 1). He consolidated his holdings through the years and eventually got control of a tract of nearly a thousand acres. He improved the place by reforestation, by repair of stonewalls, and by construction of a charming library building. He spent as much time there as possible every summer until his last; his ashes are interred there; and his greatest hope was to have it perpetuated as The Ossipee Wildlife Sanctuary.

In addition to passages in the foregoing pages that shed light on Preble's capacities and character, I may record a few other illuminative notes. At one time a great reform swept over the government service—all roll-top desks were to be eliminated as detracting from efficiency. Preble was one who lost such a desk, and he resented it. His new flat top was soon heaped with papers to whatever height their angle of repose permitted and so remained. From *Nature Magazine* experience, Editor Westwood concluded that "system was not one of . . . [Preble's] many outstanding qualities" (letter of 3 July 1940).

Preble preferred to write with pencils and always had a generous supply of well-sharpened ones at hand. "When I expect to write a full letter," he explained, "I don't want to be fenced in" (letter of 1 August 1946). The pencil-writing habit probably means that relatively few of his letters are represented by copies in his own files. He was a rather dilatory correspondent. On that point, Westwood wrote: "You know Preble and his letter-writing propensities. It is always something he is going to do tomorrow, but never gets around to" (letter of 13 August 1943).

While serious and dependable, he had a sense of humor (was an occasional contributor

to *The Auklet*). He was friendly and generous but not one to go to extremes in any direction. Sparing of speech, yet he usually managed to say the right thing at the right time. Francis Harper writes of him: "Some of his outstanding traits were simplicity of character, forthrightness, extraordinary patience and forbearance, unswerving principles, and independence . . . . He came about as near to being without a flaw as any man I ever knew" (memorandum of 30 March 1961).

In philosophy, Preble did not accept any theories as to predestination, but saw much scope for personal effort and also for chance. "What a lottery marriage is! and life altogether. Taking a right turn instead of a left or *vice versa,* may change a person's whole life and the lives of others" (letter of 10 December 1947).

From Richard Westwood's "Appreciation" (1957) I quote: "He appreciated good writing and was a careful editor, ever suspicious of inaccuracy and alert to detect it. A sincere conservationist, he had little patience with some policies that parade as conservation, and, though a gentleman, such sophistries would drive him to mild profanity. To him truth was truth and there could be no compromise."

Preble developed a good clear style of writing and we conclude this memorial with a sample that has been widely distributed and much admired.*

The Lover of Nature

To the nature lover the universe constantly pours out its wealth. Daily he gathers the fruits of seed sown in the beginning of the world.

For him no season is dull, for each is successively absorbing: In Spring he is entranced by the awakening of myriad forms of life; Summer reveals the maturity of all creation; Autumn brings the fulfillment of earlier promises; Winter lulls life to sleep, with its assurance of the resurrection.

All weathers are one: The rains of Spring nourish all nature; the heats of Summer mature and ripen its fruits; the frosts of Winter give rest and peace; in all he rejoices.

Each day is good: in the morning life awakens with him; through the noon it works; the peace and quiet of evening shed their benediction upon him.

He knows no dull moments; he seeks not to hurry time. If he be delayed, he may discover something never before seen by man, and his impatience is forgotten.

His youth is filled with the joys of discovery; in middle age the marvels about him hold his interest undimmed; he awaits old age with calmness, for he is one with the universe, and is content.

Condensed Information

Edward Alexander Preble was born at Somerville, Massachusetts, 11 June 1871 and died at Washington, D.C., 4 October 1957. Educated in public schools, through high school at Woburn, Massachusetts, 1886–1889. He married Eva A. Lynham, 29 December 1896. They had three daughters, of whom one perished in infancy and two (Marjorie Elizabeth Thorne and Evelyn Morgan Walter) survive. His first wife died 5 November 1951; and in July 1952 he married Minnie R. Setz, her cousin. This union was broken by her death in May 1954. Preble was with the U.S. Biological Survey from 1892 to 1935, rising through the grades from Field Naturalist to Senior Biologist. From 1935 until his death he was Associate Editor of *Nature Magazine* in Washington, D.C. He was a Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, a Charter Member and Honorary Member of the American Society of Mammalogists, and a Member of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the Biological Society of Washington, and the Baird Club, an informal and ephemeral

* This essay was printed in more than one issue of *Nature Magazine* and was also broadcast in card form. The latest use was in *N. M.,* December 1957, p. 537.

organization of ornithologists of the District of Columbia region. Portraits of Preble may be found in Bailey, 1939; Walter and Hannah, 1932; and Westwood, 1957. An island in Great Slave Lake and a bay in Great Bear Lake are named for him. See Westwood, 1959, for a book dedicated to our subject. One species of fish and two species and five subspecies of mammals were named for him (one of them jointly with his brother); and he described, as new, two subgenera, seven species, and 12 subspecies of mammals, most of which have stood the test of time.

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The book is dedicated to Edward Alexander Preble and has a biographical paragraph on p. 212. One of the chapters, "The Mountain Heronry" (pp. 125–129), was written by him. It appeared in *Nature Magazine* for November 1937 (Vol. 30, No. 5). The heronry was on Thurley's Mountain near Ossipee, New Hampshire.

W. L. McAtee

OBITUARIES

Titus Csörgey, Dr. Honoris Causae, a Corresponding Fellow of the A.O.U., 1875–1961. Dr. Csörgey was educated to become an ornithologist by Otto Herman, the founder of scientific ornithology and migration research in Hungary. He entered Herman's Hungarian Ornithological Institute as a zoology undergraduate in 1895 and retired from there after having held the directorship of the Institute between 1922 and 1935. His contributions were in the fields of faunistics and economic ornithology, especially the protection of economically useful birds. Well known of his earlier works are those on the avifauna of Dalmatia, on the coast of the Adriatic Sea; of the salt marshes of Lake Fertö in Hungary, and of food analyses of farm birds, especially those of the Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*). He published a volume on the life histories of such east European birds that still today are poorly known: the Rosy Pastor (*Pastor roseus*), the Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*), and others. In these, important notes of an early Hungarian naturalist, S. J. Petényi of the 1840's, were made available. Csörgey's studies of bird protection started in 1903, and his results of many years of experimentation reached 10 editions between 1913 and 1948. In agricultural Hungary biological control of insect pests was early recognized, and the encouragement of insectivorous birds constitutes an important program of the Hungarian Institute of Ornithology, as developed by Csörgey and financed by the Department of Agriculture. Not only have the hole-breeders enjoyed protection and recognition, but winter feeding, breeding boxes, and other attracting devices were