

one far advanced in incubation on the 19th, and another hatching on the 22nd. If robbed early in the season, second sets are almost invariably laid in a new but closely related situation.

Probably none but the few elect would enjoy a rhapsody on color variation in Falcons' eggs, and the non-elect would raise holy hands of horror over the thwarted hopes of these feathered brigands. So be it then, and suffice to say that neither Brooks nor Fuertes can paint a bird with such bewitching grace as Nature herself displays in the lawless tinting of a Falcon's egg. She (*varium et mutabile semper femina*) dips her brush in oorhodeine and she feathers and stipples or twirls and scumbles, or as suddenly ceases, until the hearts of her poor votaries are seized with an exquisite pain—but those dear woes we may not voice.

### WILLIAM LEON DAWSON—A BIOGRAPHY

By HARRY S. SWARTH.

WITH PORTRAIT AND TWO PHOTOS

IT IS always of interest to follow the growth of a large and important enterprise, to trace, step by step, the first early attempts by which momentous results are eventually reached, and to study the personality of the man or men behind the undertaking, the backbone of the adventure. The Cooper Ornithological Club has in recent years widened the scope of its activities to an extent probably undreamed of by its founders, being now committed to the active support of several undertakings of unusual interest and moment; and the individuals most directly concerned in each of these different enterprises have naturally become objects of particular interest to their fellow club members.

Among the projects which the Club has pledged itself to support there is probably none of greater general interest than the proposed publication, "The Birds of California," undertaken by William Leon Dawson, and now being so energetically pushed towards completion. Those of us most closely in touch with Mr. Dawson—who have had opportunities of observing the growth and development of the undertaking—have felt that others would be interested to know something of the circumstances leading up to so desirable a consummation as the production of the work as planned, as well as something of the ideas and ideals with which the author approaches his task. In this brief sketch the main incidents of his career are outlined, and an attempt is made to interpret some of his aspirations as to what the forthcoming book should be.

William Leon Dawson, an only child, was born at Leon, Decatur County, Iowa, February 20, 1873. The family soon after removed to western Kansas, where the father, William E. Dawson, a lawyer, helped to organize the county of Rush, becoming its first prosecuting attorney, and later its first superintendent of public instruction. A little later the father entered the ministry, and the family removed, first, in 1879, to Ottawa, Kansas, two years later to northern Illinois. When the son was twelve years of age they moved to Ahtanum, Yakima County, Washington; and when he was fourteen to Seattle, where he entered the State University, at that time little more than a high school.

The boy had already a fondness for natural history, an attribute not so uncommon in youth, but which too frequently dies out through lack of encourage-



Fig. 15. WILLIAM LEON DAWSON  
Photo by W. Edwin Gledhill

ment and guidance. In this instance the son received from his father, although himself not a naturalist, inspiration for a passionate and lasting love for the out-of-doors and for all that it includes. The religious influence of the mother developed in the child a hopeful courage and exuberant cheerfulness, conducive to ambitious effort, regardless of obstacles. The love for the open in general soon had a more definite objective in a collection of birds' eggs, started in emulation of a young friend. "It was in northern Illinois in 1883 that I flushed a Prairie Hen from a nest of fifteen eggs. 'Roy Sears collects birds' eggs; why not I? Just one'. (And the memory of those fourteen wasted eggs has haunted me ever since!)" Among still more youthful recollections he speaks of several incidents connected with bird life, which stand out in vivid remembrance—at four of being lifted up to see the eggs in a Brown Thrasher's nest; at five of being lowered over a sandbank on a rope, to investigate Bank Swallows' nests; and of his excitement the next fall at the sight of a migrating host of hawks, which filled the nearby trees at nightfall.

The accumulation of eggs soon led to a desire to learn more of the birds themselves. Wood's "Natural History" and a "Library of Universal Knowledge" did but poorly appease this hunger for knowledge, although the scanty information relating to American birds contained in these books was eagerly gleaned from the mass of other matter. Not until he was eighteen did the young student acquire a real bird book, Coues' "Key" (fourth edition), the possession of which marked the beginning of a new era in his development. At sixteen he had begun systematically to keep written record of his ornithological observations. This journal he has continued uninterruptedly ever since its inception, and this careful elaboration of observations has done much toward ensuring accuracy, as well as variety and exactness of expression; while perhaps the greatest value to the mature student is the record of the changing view points of the growing youth.

It was while a student at the University of Washington, working under Professor O. B. Johnson, himself somewhat interested in ornithology, that Dawson first conceived the hope of perhaps some day writing a work upon the birds of the state. A little later, as a freshman at Oberlin College, he came in contact with an older student, Lynds Jones, and it was to Jones that he owed, as he puts it, "the unstopping of the ears".

"It is marvellous in retrospect", he says, "to think how dependent I was upon a single faculty, that of vision, in endeavoring to learn the life of the birds. It was as though I had no ears until Jones pointed out the beauty and variety of bird music. Now I take as much pride in recognizing a bird by its faintest chirp or twitter as by its color-pattern or fashion of flight. Indeed, in the appreciation of birds I should sooner sacrifice eyesight than hearing."

The friendship between Dawson and Jones was lasting, and the two men did much work together. A paper entitled "A Summer Reconnaissance in the West" appeared in the *Wilson Bulletin* (no. 33, 1900) giving "horizons" of the birds seen on an extensive western trip undertaken by the two companions.

Although from his earliest years so deeply interested in birds, Dawson had only the ministry in mind as his life's work, and in pursuance of this career he entered the theological seminary at Oberlin in 1894, instead of completing his college course. On May 1, 1895, he was married to Miss Etta Ackerman, also a student at Oberlin, and the following year was spent as a home missionary and Sunday school worker in Okanogan County, Washington, a parish then larger than the state of New Jersey! In this exceedingly attractive ornithological field

the birds secured somewhat more than their due share of attention, and various short papers were published as some of the results of the year's observations. Probably the most important of these was "A Preliminary List of the Birds of Okanogan County, Washington", recording 145 species, which appeared in *The Auk* for April, 1897:

His constantly augmenting interest in ornithology bred a desire to abandon the ministry for science, and Dawson returned to Oberlin once more to take his senior year in college, securing a position in the college museum. The dissection of cats in a college laboratory, however, proved much less interesting than the study of birds in a virgin field such as he had just left, and the evangelical interest gained strength once more; so that the following year found him enrolled as middler in the theological seminary. He graduated from the institution with highest honors, gaining the greatest financial prize awarded for the year.



Fig. 16. THE STUDIO, LOS COLIBRIS

Following his graduation Dawson returned to Washington, but after a year in Yakima County, in charge of a moribund country church and an equally discouraging country academy, he accepted a call to a vigorous city church in Columbus, Ohio. Here the burden of clearing a big church debt developed an unsuspected talent for "raising money", a most useful faculty in the work to come in later years. The labor involved in this added obligation, however, together with the somewhat uncongenial exactions of a large city parish, caused a physical breakdown which finally decided Mr. Dawson to definitely abandon the ministry, and devote himself entirely to ornithology.

Prominent among his parishioners, and a close personal friend, was an experienced book-man, and the two together planned the publication of "The Birds of Ohio". This was published in the winter of 1903-04, and the work itself met with instant approval, an edition of 5,000 copies being quickly sold out. But the

affairs of the publishing company were mis-managed, and Mr. Dawson withdrew, determined to profit by the mistakes of this first venture, and to become himself responsible for the financial management as well as for the literary and scientific sides of any similar undertaking in the future.

He returned to the state of Washington, where, in the spring of 1905, he organized the Occidental Publishing Company, and began work on his "Birds of Washington". These were boom days in the northwest, and it speaks volumes for the character of the man that he should have persistently disregarded the financial allurements constantly offered in a community gone real-estate-mad, to continue steadfastly in the pursuit of his object. Four years of unremitting and arduous labor finally resulted in 1909 in the complete success of what at first had seemed but the dream of a visionary, the production of one of the most beautiful sets of books in modern ornithological literature.

The high appreciation of his efforts expressed by certain members of the Cooper Club contained perhaps the first suggestion of the desirability of attempting a similar work in California. This course of action was decided upon only after a year's deliberation, but the field afforded such unrivaled opportunities, and the encouragement and support proffered were so reassuring that there was no resisting the temptation.

In the selection of a dwelling place the charms of Santa Barbara prevailed over the rest of the state, and here, on the outskirts of the city, a comfortable home, "Los Colibris", was established, a place for rest in the brief intervals between campaigns of activity in the field, and for the planning of future work.

An immediate result of this choice of a home has been an exceedingly interesting series of studies of water birds, some of which are already familiar to CONDOR readers. With the summer months spent in the field, photographing, observing, and collecting, and with the winters devoted to the arduous labors involved in the financial end of such an undertaking, time passes swiftly, and three or four years seems all too short an interval in which to produce such a book as the one planned. The field work so far has included expeditions to the Farallon Islands, to the Warner Mountains in extreme northeastern California, and to the Mount Whitney region, as well as numerous shorter trips. During the coming spring the Colorado Desert birds will receive their deserved share of attention. The Farallon trip was unexpectedly productive, of two birds new to California, the Black-throated Green Warbler and Oven-bird: rather startling records from such a locality.

As to the desirability of the work which Mr. Dawson has begun, and as to his personal fitness for the undertaking, there can be no question. Its tendency to awaken interest in the subject treated on the part of many who would be otherwise utterly indifferent is alone a feature the importance of which can not be over-estimated. In every aspect of work in which we are all engaged, whether in trying to arouse interest in a Museum project, or in attempting to guide the public toward the enactment of intelligent legislation as regards the animal life of a commonwealth, there is almost always a long and usually discouraging period which must be devoted to educational work. During this period every energy must be devoted toward awakening a proper public sentiment in the matter, frequently overcoming unreasonable or adverse prejudice. In its educational aspect alone such a work as Mr. Dawson's is invaluable.

A book of the nature of the projected work occupies a distinctive position of its own. It in nowise conflicts with the more technical papers which other students are producing, but appeals to a clientele which the latter never reach,

one to whom the rather dry and formal style of the usual "state list" would appear to be extremely dull and uninteresting. To produce an artistic and attractive set of books, filled with beautiful illustrations and containing text which presents the subject matter in pleasing and novel style, is to popularize the subject of ornithology in a way undreamed of and impossible of attainment to the self-centered specialist, intent on his own particular line of study.

Those who have followed Mr. Dawson's work cannot fail to have been impressed by the originality of his style, and by the pleasing manner of treatment. It is given to but few writers on this or kindred subjects to say their say in such a way as to hold the reader's attention regardless of the fact as to whether or not he is particularly interested in the branch of science treated. Among the older writers on birds Audubon and Wilson at once spring into the mind as having owed their fame to this peculiar gift more, perhaps, than to any other of their ac-

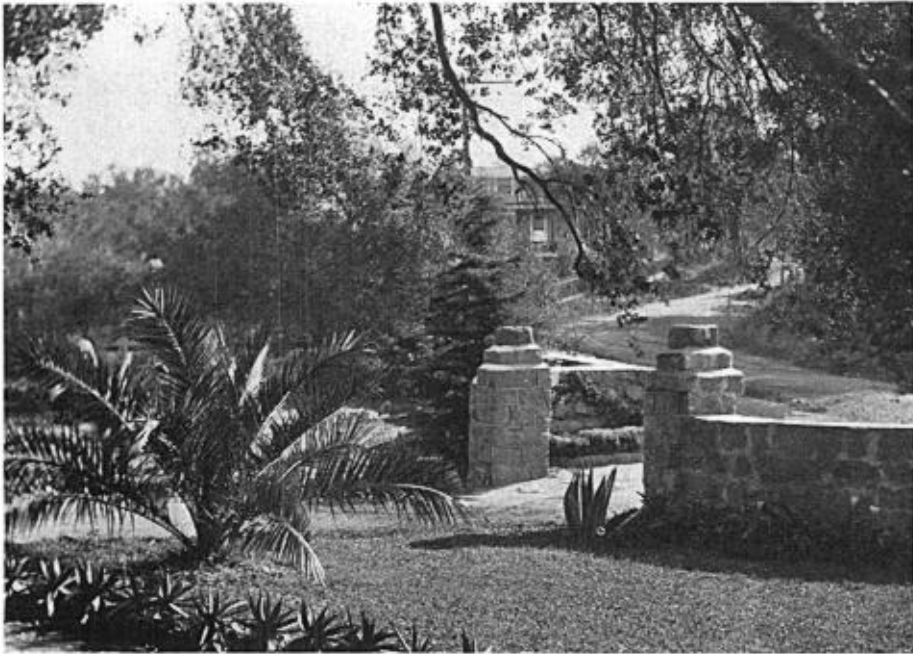


Fig. 17. THE GATEWAY, LOS COLIBRIS

complishments. Coues, also, wonderfully attractive writer that he was, had to perfection the faculty of drawing a pleasing and fanciful sketch of a bird, and by means of most imaginative similes and comparisons, presenting an absolutely lifelike and accurate picture.

It is no disparagement of the many able and conscientious bird students of today to say that, however thorough and accurate their published writings may be, there are but very few who have this gift of holding the interest of the general public. Where we *do* find this faculty it is the duty, and most decidedly to the interest, of all ornithologists to see that the fortunate writer is given the utmost opportunity to use his talent to the best advantage.

In all of Mr. Dawson's work the feeling borne by a true lover of books as such toward a beautiful edition is very apparent. A cheap book has nothing to recommend it in his eyes, an attitude which has resulted in "patrons' editions"

and "editions de luxe" rather overwhelming to the student who has been accustomed to regard an outlay of a few dollars for bird books as something of an extravagance. So much depends upon the point of view! The present writer implicitly believes that certain books should most undoubtedly be made to sell cheaply. A hand book designed to help the beginner should certainly be issued in such a way as to most surely reach the audience for which it is intended.

On the other hand, that which is too easily obtained is apt to be held in but slight esteem. "The Birds of California" is not issued as a hand book, nor should it be compared with a dry and technical check list. It is a magnificent and artistic handling of a beautiful subject. Whoever secures a copy will have made sufficient of a sacrifice to obtain it to cause him to place high value upon his possession, a value it will amply deserve.

The originality and charm of Dawson's style is all his own, but with all his variety of expression there can be no doubt of his constant and conscious striving for accuracy. Perfection, of course, is attainable to none, but there is vast differ-

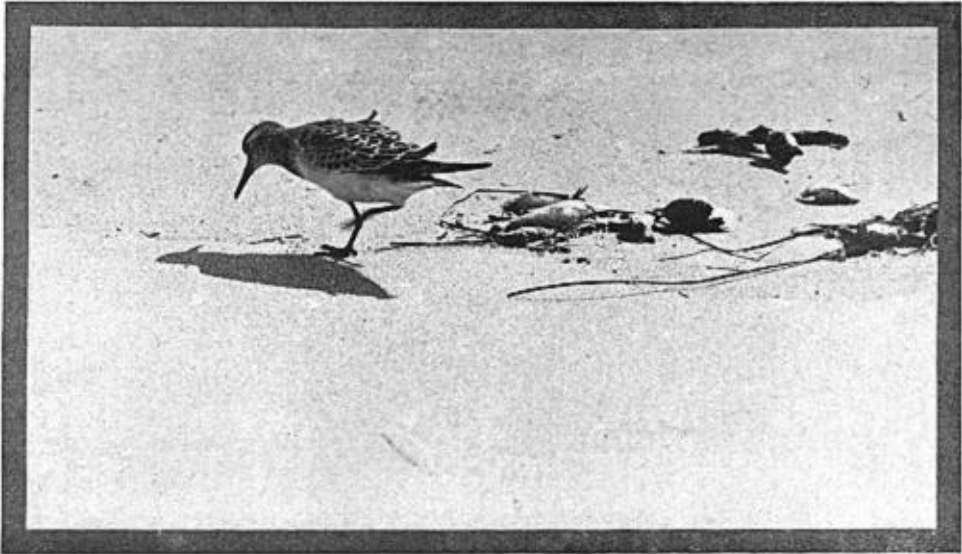


Fig. 18. THE BAIRD SANDPIPER  
From a photograph, copyright 1913, by W. L. Dawson

ence between error of judgment and that of intent. A mere fact is of itself of no value. Different statements of the same fact will differ in value precisely as the men who report them differ in imaginative power. The man we listen to is he who lets his imagination play about a fact, who is able to see its relationships, and hence invests it with real value and interest.

The application of this test to Mr. Dawson's work apparently gives the real clue to the philosophy of his writings. He does not feel called upon to serve some such abstraction as Truth or Science, so much as to proclaim *now*, be it more or less complete, what may later on, after further assimilation, be readjusted and receive a different value from that accorded it today. In comparison with this attitude we may consider the opposite type, also found among us, the man who sits back and gloats over the realization that he has in his possession a vast store of accurate knowledge of some particular subject, known to no one else

and which he has no intention of parting with; deriving his pleasure from the faulty attempts of others less fortunately situated, along the same line of study. The mistakes sometimes made from a too hasty acceptance of first impressions seem of small moment compared with what may be endured through the peculiar temperament of this type of student. "It is better to play ball, even if you make a wild throw once in awhile, than it is to sit on the bleachers and carp at the players".

### ALLAN BROOKS—AN APPRECIATION

By WILLIAM LEON DAWSON

WITH PORTRAIT

BROOKS is sitting right now at the great north window of our studio at "Los Colibris", whither we have succeeded in luring him for the winter. His high stool is drawn up to a large work table, where he is alternately poring over a handful of bird-skins and sketching with swift, deft fingers an imaginary spray full of very real Warblers. He doesn't in the least suspect what I am going to do to him, and I am feeling somewhat guilty as well as very solemn in this most traitorous act of friendship. It is perfectly certain though that I shall catch it when he does find out, for he is, above all things else, a modest man, and would shrink from even the mellow light of *THE CONDOR*'s pages.

Along the east wall of the studio stretches a length of burlap whereon are hung the latest products of the artist's skill, and I slip over once in a while to gloat over them all, or to make *moues* at the latest arrival, with all the easy assurance and something of the honest pride of the family doctor. Just now the Dwarf Hermit Thrush is paying court to a Flammulated Screech Owl, and the Elegant Tern is considering whether the Allen Hummer hard by would not make an elegant mouthful. In my opinion he would, for he is a quivery morsel of fire, alive in every iridescent vane. And it is first of all because these birds live, live and breathe and flaunt their feathers in our faces, that the life story of their re-creator is worth telling.

Allan Brooks was born of English parents on the 15th day of February, 1869, in Ettawah, India. His father, William Edwin Brooks, was a civil engineer in charge of construction on the East Indian Railway. Ornithology was the father's hobby, and young Allan took to it almost from infancy. Although he was removed at the age of five to the home land, as practically all European children must be to escape the unaccustomed diseases of a deadly climate, he remembers vividly many of the Indian birds, and articles in *Stray Feathers*, to which his father was a leading contributor.

Left to the various mercies of seven maiden aunts, the youthful Allan chewed and eschewed the catechism, attended school, robbed birds' nests, and early and irrevocably decided against matrimony. While other boys were playing cricket, he was roaming the hills, and by the time his fellows had mastered hazing he had learned the birds of England.

In 1881 the father returned to England after twenty-eight years' service in India, and almost immediately thereafter conducted his family of six members to Ontario, where Allan's mother died. The next six years were divided between farm-work, school, and the formation of an extensive collection of bird-skins. By rare good fortune there was at hand a full kit of brushes and water-colors, a heritage of the father's really creditable but self-depreciated years of effort. Young Allan