

EXTINCTION OF OUR BIRDS.

BY LE GRAND T. MEYER.

Like the once impenetrable forests which bedecked our prairies, protecting us from the varying temperatures and securing an uniform rainfall; like the once well-stocked lakes and rivers with fish, now comparatively barren; like the once common mammals that swarmed the woods; so, likewise, is the time rapidly approaching when our present common birds will become rare or obsolete.

What is the cause of this extermination, you are ready to ask? Let me enumerate the artificial causes, taken from trustworthy observations and statistics.

First, the "Pot-Hunters." Those human fiends that from day to day tramp the happy feeding grounds of game birds. Let us take some of the common species which were once abundant and are now extinct in many localities, and see if my assertion or logic is defective.

The Pinnated Grouse and Quail (I might mention the Ruffed Grouse if it was not for its wonderful powers of flight), were once one of the most common game birds east of Mississippi River, now nearly extinct among the New England and Middle States. For a market supported by bloated epicures and sensualists, they have done their work thoroughly.

The multitudes of Geese and Ducks have become so reduced that hunting them as a pursuit has become unprofitable.

Where are the myriads of Pigeons, Wilson and Audubon give us such glowing accounts of, less than a century ago? With us even the old settlers remember flocks that would dim the sky for hours in passing; now we see a few straggling pairs paying pilgrimage to their ancestor's haunts.

Second, for Fashion. Those ladies (?) that from their ill-concealed vanity yearly sign the death warrants of millions of birds simply because they possess an attractive plumage. Recently, an item in an exchange read: "Lady Gemini appeared in the reception room with a dress decorated with patches of three thousand Brazilian Humming-birds!" Not long ago I saw a woman in a cable-car wearing a hat with the heads of, by actual count, twenty-one Quails. Do you think

they were taken from those slaughtered for the market? Impossible.

One human resemblance, living near the sea-coast of South Carolina, supplied, for a New York milliner, three thousand Roseate Terns ; so that locality, once resoundant with happy parental cries of this graceful "Sea Swallow," is silent.

Among the lagoons of the Southern States, hunters from day to day kill scores of the Great White Herons, the Spoonbills and the Ibises simply because they possess a few plumes. The loss of these species would be a truly national loss. Verily, they are doomed, from the plebian Sparrow to the graceful Swan.

Third, our Amateur Naturalists. Many of the present embryotic Ornithologists believe that in order to become Audubons or Bairds, they must slaughter indiscriminately every species met, and every nest must be robbed, under the transparent veil of science. A prominent Ornithologist in our state asks, in speaking of shooting Herons for their plumes, whether it makes any real difference whether they are shot in the fall migrations, or in their colonies or heronries with nests of eggs or young. Plainly the difference is too obvious to enumerate.

A true Ornithologist is a bird's best friend ; his aim should be to perpetuate every species, destroying their enemies rather than fostering them. The inspection of a collector's cabinet resulted as follows : six hundred insectivorous and graminivorous skins, while only thirty-eight specimens represented the order Raptores. A fair sample of one's work.

Let us all then, during the approaching season, not show too much greediness, and above all do not make marks of every bird found, simply for the sport of killing them.

This law alone would save thousands every year.

