

WALTER J. HOXIE.

BY FRANK L. BURNS.

The accompanying photos were taken near Port Royal, S. C., May 10, 1901, "a red letter day" Walter J. Hoxie called it. Mr. Hoxie has written that he had not given up ornithology



Young Black Vultures (*Catharista atrata*). By W. J. Hoxie.

but ornithology had given him up when it became a question of bread and butter. As a taxidermist, he failed to settle down in any place; in fact, could not get altogether suited as to locality. I do not know whether he is living at this date. He "began just before the '60's," and kept up a pretty steady correspondence with Prof. Baird and Dr. Coues. A Yankee

schoolmaster, locating near Frogmore, S. C., in the palmy days of the "O. and O.," he wrote many entertaining and instructive papers, seeming to see the joke in everything possible. In July, '88, the U. S. Department of Agriculture employed him to collect in Florida at \$75 per month and expenses to Titusville. He was to look up certain species and



Young Black Vultures (*Catharista atrata*) Asleep in their Nest.

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visit certain localities at his own expense from there. At once he met difficulties: predatory mammals, birds and insects made away with nearly all trapped specimens, sometimes trap and all; skins were devastated by small ants and gigantic cockroaches; expenses exceeded salary; so reducing his baggage to a minimum, he departed for Cape Canaveral with 100

rounds of ammunition, of which he scarcely wasted a shot; and lived on "shot meat" to recuperate his finances. Yellow fever breaking out, Jacksonville and counties in Florida quarantined against one another; so it was some time before he could make his way into the interior and take the desired specimens of the Florida Burrowing Owl and Little Striped Skunk (his description of the breeding habits of the former is quoted by Bendire in his *Life Histories*), and we hear of him wading the swamps north of Okeechobee bare-legged, in company with a Seminole, and shooting the Carolina Paroquet; it was here, too, he received the thirty days' notice from the Department, as he had not averaged the required twenty specimens a day. Since that time he has visited Florida twice and had "no end of a good time," but added nothing to the literature of the country. During our latest financial depression, he writes in '95: "Never saw such hard times. I am tired of looking for the 'silver lining to the cloud.' Nickels or even coppers would be awfully dazzling to my sight." 1901 finds him leading the lonely and rather hard life of a shipkeeper on board the *Accomac*, Port Royal naval station; and it was here while lying on his back in a bunk during his "four hours off," the touching little narrative of the "Rough-wings of the Tucules" was written—the first article to appear in the *Wilson Bulletin* after the present writer took it up for the year 1901—that volume so prolific in typographical errors, vexatious delays and unfruitful toil on the part of the editor and publisher. Walter Hoxie was an honest observer. He could write and he could shoot; he appears to have valued information above specimens. Perhaps he possessed too much sentiment in his make-up to be a successful collector. Who knows?