

AN APRIL DAY'S MIGRATION IN THE DAKOTA VALLEY.

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The northward flight of water-fowl always attracts attention. The northern Mississippi Basin is noted for great flights. Fifty years ago perhaps Illinois and Iowa were favored in this regard, but now it appears that eastern South Dakota excels.

Many of the myriads of water-fowl which nest in the lakes and marshes of northeastern South Dakota, North Dakota and Canada apparently follow the Missouri Valley to the junction of the Dakota (James) Valley, which many ascend to its beginning near Devil's Lake, N. D. The Dakota Valley, though almost flat in its general features, has thousands of small, shallow, glacial lakes and ponds which afford much used stopping-places. Corresponding depressions in the more populous states are either drained or so intensively hunted as to be comparatively unavailable for large numbers of game-birds.

It was my good fortune to spend a few days, early in a recent April, at the family home, which is situated on a bluff between, and overlooking, the Dakota Valley and a pair of fair-sized glacial lakes. April 4 was such a notable day that I am tempted to endeavor to describe it.

The winter had been long and severe. Birds did not come in abundance until March 30. By April 4 ice had almost disappeared; a little green grass could be seen; the earliest prairie flowers (*Peucednum* and pasque flower) were just appearing; wheat-seeding had commenced; a warm south wind prevailed.

Throughout the day, from sunrise to well into the night, flocks of Ducks, Geese and Cranes passed. Only for short intervals would an examination of the sky not reveal one or more northward-flying bands.

The Sandhill Crane is one of the most conspicuous birds of the prairie region, and most country boys know its unsur-

passed call of rich bugle-like notes. Flocks, ordinarily of about twenty individuals, were seen, soaring at great heights and drifting northward, or flying lower in a more or less direct line. During the day more than a dozen flocks were seen, and in the evening several were heard to pass in rapid succession, indicating that in the darkness soaring is replaced by direct flight.

Four flocks of scores of silent, silvery Snow Geese were seen; three were of the Lesser, and one of the Greater. In two of the flocks a few dark, immature birds contrasted sharply with the white adults. A half-dozen flocks of honking Canadas were seen, and one flock of Hutchins' passed as did geese intermediate in size, the White-fronted Geese.

Many flights of Ducks were seen, but from the usual distance only a few sorts (Mallards, Pintail, Teal and Scaup) could be recognized. At a near-by lake I identified with the help of binoculars the following species: Hooded Merganser, Mallard, Gadwall, Baldpate, Green-winged Teal, Shoveller, Pintail, Redhead, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Golden-eye and Buffle-head.

Only a few of the land birds enjoyed on that memorable day will be mentioned. Western Meadowlarks proclaimed in matchless tones from every side that they were "at home." During the early morning their songs had the distant drumming of the prairie chicken as an accompaniment. During most of the day the meadowlarks supplied the accompaniment for the songs of tourists. Flocks of Chestnut-collared Longspurs passed at frequent intervals, singing loudly as they flew. Many great bunches of Thick-billed Redwings passed with jingled commotion. Fully a dozen loose groups of large hawks were seen making good headway northward. The Swainson's Hawk appeared most numerous, but the Western Red-tailed and Marsh Hawk were scarcely less plentiful.