

HERONS AND GAME FISH.

Maine's Unwritten Law for the Protection of Big Wading Birds.

Trolling for salmon and brass or exploring the coves for lilies and pickerel, the summer visitor in Maine often watches with pleasure the movements of his fellow fisherman, the big blue heron. Standing motionless on one leg in shoal water, watching for a chance to spear a frog or minnow with his beak, wading or flying from point to point along the shore, or flapping his way to and from the heron's nesting colony in the trees of some impassable swamp, this lone fisherman is ever picturesque and interesting. It was with surprise that a New York man summering in Maine recently learned that the Board of Game and Fish Commissioners of the State was unfriendly to the heron and urged his assassination on the ground that the bird is supposed sometimes to feed on trout. Two years ago an order went forth from the Commissioners that the herons of the Sebec Lake region should be accounted outlaws to be killed on sight by the game wardens, and that their nesting colony on Burden Pond should be broken up. But the country people of Maine, with all their shrewdness in business, have a vein of sentiment in their nature and they stand by the old resident of the State.

When the order to kill the Sebec herons was issued the people of Piscataquis, the great game and fish county of the State, raised such a protest that a hearing in the matter was had at Dover, and it was attended by many representative citizens. Their testimony was all in favor of the heron, who rendered the State excellent service in ridding the waters of useless and objectionable fish and reptiles while interfering little or not at all with the game fish. The Commissioners brought evidence to show that herons had been known to catch trout. To this allegation the citizens responded that there were other features in attractiveness of the Maine wilderness to be considered besides fish; that there were many natives and visitors who valued the picturesqueness of the land and waterscape to which the heron lent an ever pleasing feature, and that they did not want the birds killed.

The results of the hearing was a suspension of hostilities against the herons, but the Commissioners renewed their attack in the next session of the Legislature by getting the herons included in the list of birds like crows and hawks, which are exempted in the game laws from protection at all seasons. It was expected that by this move every hit or-miss gunner of the class which makes life unsafe in Maine in the shooting season would be encouraged to blaze away at the herons. But the scheme has failed, for the guides and genuine sportsmen will not fire at the birds in any season, and the amateurs who travel with guns and the ambition to kill something easy to shoot have found their experiments in heron shooting too unpopular to induce their continuance. So the big birds flap to and from Burden Point, back of Granny Cross Mountain, and stalk the shallows of the Sebec Lake coves as unconcerned as if the Commissioners had never conspired against their peace and no man molests them.

One of the guides, a master hunter and a fisherman, when asked about the herons and whether they really destroy trout, replied:

"Well, it stands to reason that a heron will eat a trout as quick as he will any other fish that might swim within reach of his beak. But where does he do his fishing? A chub or frog is as good to his taste as a trout, and he likes the feel of the warm, still waters of a shallow pond about his legs better than the old current of the brooks, where the trout swim. With the big pond trout that lie in deep water of course he has no business, anyway. When he wets his feet in running water, which he sometimes takes a notion to do, what does he catch? Trout, if he can, as well as any other fish that swim his way, but the trout he eats are few compared with the chubs and suckers and eels and water snakes that he swallows, which are great destroyers of trout spawn. Instead of a drawback, the heron is a benefit to the game fish.

"Let me tell you what I once found out about herons taking trout. A party of four of us were fishing in the headquarters of the Piscataquis River, and for five or six days running we started up a heron every day at some point or other along the stream we were camped on. We were not taking many fish—trout seemed scarce that summer in the Piscataquis waters—and we laid the cause to the herons. So I took my gun out with me one day and shot the heron that we had seen and opened his craw to see what he had been feeding on. Inside it I found half a dozen chubs, two suckers, a water snake a foot long and one small trout. He had been riding the stream of the worst enemies of trout spawn, and the only toll he had taken of trout was a

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finger ring three inches long. I have never killed a heron since nor let one be killed when my word could prevent it."

SPANISH SOLDIERS AT HOME.

The Hardships They Endured While Returning to Spain.

The conditions existing on board the transports that carried the Spanish soldiers home to Spain, from Cuba and Puerto Rico, were unspeakably horrible. Even the censored accounts which the Spanish journals were permitted to publish are too offensive to decency to bear repetition. A writer in the Anglo-American, who was at Malaga when the troops consigned to that place disembarked, gives a pitifully graphic description of the harrowing scenes she witnessed as they made their way through the city. Many—helplessly weak from disease or starvation, or sick unto death—were jolted along in carriages. Behind followed their comrades, a ghastly procession, in a piteous travesty of a march—swaying, tottering, reeling; famine in their pinched and ashen faces, their skeleton forms clothed in noisome remnants of garments, or swathed in the tattered remains of blankets.

One unfortunate, a mere lad, fell fainting by the wayside. A woman hastened toward him, knelt to lift his head, and tenderly supporting it on her shoulder, strove to comfort him. A kind-hearted cake-seller thrust a portion of his wares into the soldier's nerveless hand. Then, as the soldier's comrades, catching sight of the food, broke ranks, and threatened to despoil the vender, he threw his stock broadcast among them.

"Boys," he said, "it's all I've got. I wish I had more for you!"

"Just at that moment an officer passed, accompanied by his wife, a large, white-faced, fat person, and the officer shouted imperiously to the people, 'Quitarse! quitarse!' ('Out of the way there! Make way there!') The crowd parted a little, and at that moment the woman sitting on the ground, supporting the sick soldier, caught sight of the jewelry on the officer's wife.

"In an instant the pity in her face vanished. Advancing her head like a snake over the prostrate head resting upon her shoulder, with gleaming eyes and bared teeth, her voice rising to a harsh scream, she cried, threateningly:

"Mujeres, mirad a esta mujer!' ('Women look at that woman!') And then, 'Look at her jewelry, bracelets and rings! Look at her cursed fat body, and look at this boy!' tearing open his cotton coat and showing his naked skeleton form.

"The officer and his wife, badly frightened, as they had every reason to be, hastily retreated from the ring of threatening faces and made their way as quickly as possible down a narrow side street, followed by the howls and taunts of the now angry crowd. They were lucky to escape so easily from the mob."

When people of the English-speaking race wish to do honor to a man, they give him a dinner; when human misery is to be alleviated, they get up a subscription. True to his characteristic of the race, the English and Americans sojourning at Malaga bounteously provided money to buy medicine, food and clothing for Spain's sick, starving and ragged defenders—a duty their own government had neglected.

Among the applicants for aid was a youthful sailor of Cervera's fleet, whose presence brought the one gleam of happy human interest into the depressing picture of misery.

"He had been a prisoner in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and was still dressed in the clothes which he had been provided, and thank God! they were a credit to the people who had given them. A warm, blue serge suit, good underclothing, shoes and socks, everything well made, stout and strong, exactly the same as those provided for our own 'bluejackets.'"

"He said, taking hold of his sailor blouse, 'These clothes were given to me by the Yankees. They're very nice aren't they?'"

"We agreed very cordially indeed, and with suppressed smiles, we ask if they had been well-treated by the 'Yankees,' and he in blissful ignorance of our nationality, launched out into a delighted and eager panegyric upon our people, their works and ways."

"Kind. I should think they were kind. They gave us meat every day!" He certainly thought earthly praise could not go beyond this."

No incident of the war conferred more honor upon our own nation than our



treatment of Cervera's men, and the comments of the young sailor showed that it appreciated. —Youth's Companion

CANALS COST MONEY.

But Their Profits are very Large Whenever They Prove Successful.

The Manchester Ship Canal, connecting Manchester and Liverpool, cost \$90,000,000, or \$15,000,000 more than the original estimate. The cost of the Nicaragua Canal to connect the Atlantic and the Pacific through Central America and thereby shorten the distance between New York and San Francisco from 15,600 to 4,900 miles, is variously estimated at from \$100,000,000 to \$200,000,000, according to the route adopted. The Suez Canal cost \$100,000,000. The North Sea Canal in Germany cost \$37,500, the North Holland and the Corinth canals \$15,000,000 each, and the Panama Canal has cost to date \$250,000,000.

Canals when successful are generously so. The Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal, purchased by the British Government in 1876 for \$20,000,000 are now worth more than \$120,000,000, and there are many indications that the future value of the Suez Canal shares will be even greater in view of the fact that this canal enjoys a peculiar monopoly of business which enables it without danger from competition to charge very heavy tolls and to enforce their collection without Government interference, the canal being practically owned by the English Government, which is administering the financial affairs of Egypt.

Another country in which the canal system is a source of large profit is Holland. Holland has nine miles of canal for every 100 square miles of area, a proportion not equalled elsewhere and four times as great as in the United Kingdom. The Dutch canals have an aggregate length of 1,830

miles, and for their maintenance the State expends \$3,000,000 yearly. The Helder begun in 1819 and completed six years later, is 60 miles long, 120 feet wide and 20 deep, allowing two merchantmen to pass abreast, and navigable for the largest vessels. The North Sea Canal built in 1863-74, is 240 feet wide and 23 deep, and brings Amsterdam within fifteen miles of the sea; length, 14 miles; cost \$10,000,000.

The success of the Kiel Canal, connecting the Baltic with the North Sea, has led to increased popularity for canals in Germany, and there has been organized in that country a company to construct a mid-European canal connecting Germany with European Turkey. The proposed new route uses the existing connections between the navigable river and canal systems of Germany and the Danube, in Austria. There are now nearly 9,000 miles of waterways in Germany of which 67 per cent. are rivers and 33 per cent. canals; and while the proposed extension of the German canal system into Austria would entail a large expenditure, the benefits of it in a commercial way would be considerable. Plans have already been adopted for connecting the Danube with the Elbe.

Unlike railroads, the revenues from the operation of which can be estimated in advance with some approach to accuracy, canals are constructed without any assurance of repayment to projectors. The Erie canal, the chief canal in the United States the construction of which cost about \$100,000,000 was paid in tolls collected \$130,000,000 regardless of the fact that a number of years ago the canal was made free for all and all toll charges were removed. In the general opinion the success of the Nicaragua Canal will be as great in a pecuniary way as that of the Suez Canal.

DEEP SEA SOUNDINGS.

Prof. Nathorst Discovers Some of the Depths Recorded Thirty-one Years Ago.

Just before he sailed for the east coast of Greenland a few weeks ago, Prof. Nathorst, the geologist and Arctic explorer, was asked how it happened that the deep sea soundings which he made last year in the Arctic Ocean differed so largely from those of the Swedish Arctic expedition, made in the same waters thirty-one years ago. These soundings were in that part of the sea known as the Swedish deep, between Spitzbergen and Greenland and the expedition of 1868 believed it reached a depth of 2,650 fathoms. Prof. Nathorst tested this measurement last year, and touched the bottom in the Swedish deep at 1,475 fathoms. In other words, the greatest depths he could find in this part of the sea was 6,050 feet less than that recorded thirty years before, which up to this time has figured on the maps as the depth of that part of the ocean.

"This discrepancy is very large," said the professor, "but I believe it may easily be explained. There is no doubt in my mind that it is due to the imperfect methods of sounding employed thirty years ago. The greatest trouble is to know with certainty when the bottom is reached at such depths, and the problem must have been much more difficult thirty years ago than it is now. The lead we used weighed 77 pounds, and its weight was augmented by two sinkers, each weighing 110 pounds, and yet it was by no means easy to tell when the lead touched bottom, for the line still continued to run out on account of its own weight.

As a check we had recourse to the watch. Every hundred metre length of the sounding line was marked with a piece of cloth. We timed with the watch the time required for each successive length to cross the gunwale. As soon as the lead touched the bottom the line paid out more slowly, but we could not have detected the fact without the record supplied by the watch. I am certain that we were never once mistaken as to the time the lead really reached the bottom.

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