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IN MEMORIAM: EUGENE PINTARD BICKNELL.
1859-1925.

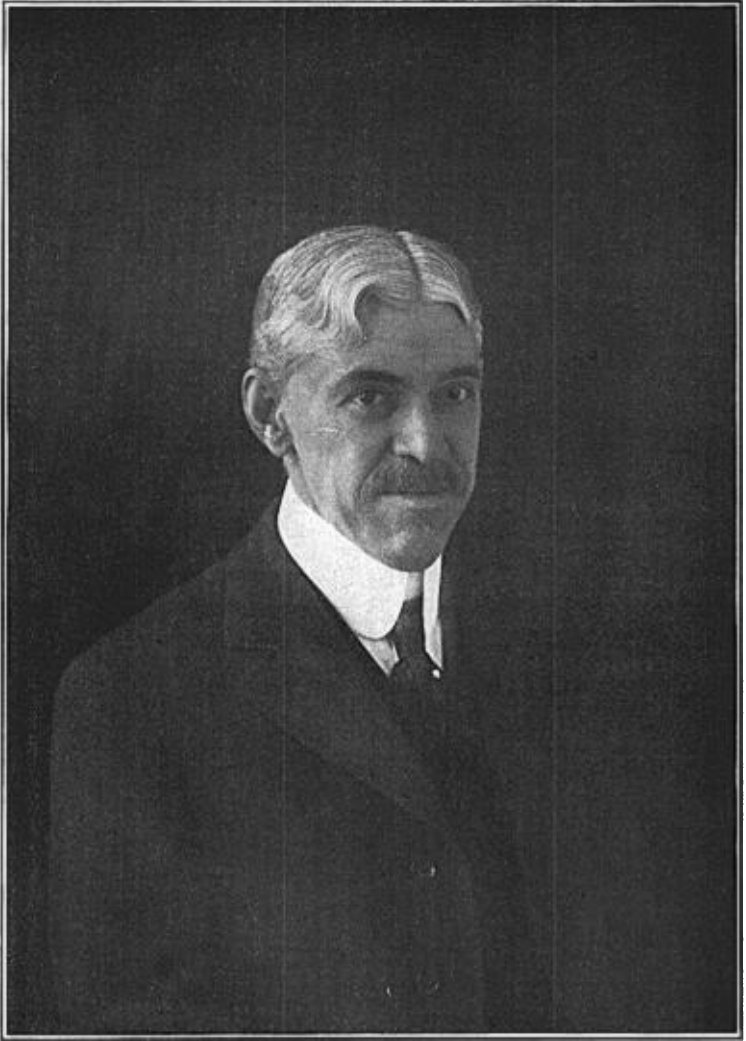
BY MAUNSELL SCHIEFFELIN CROSBY.

Plate V.

EUGENE PINTARD BICKNELL, the youngest founder of the American Ornithologists' Union, died at his home at Hewlett, Long Island, N. Y., on February 9, 1925.

He was born at Riverdale-on-Hudson on September 23, 1859, being the sixth son of Joseph Inglis Bicknell and Maria Theresa Pierrepont. He was descended from Zachary Bicknell and his wife Agnes, who came to Weymouth, Massachusetts, from England in 1635 bringing with them one son, John. John had five sons and from these are said to be descended all the Bicknells in the United States. Another paternal ancestor was Gregory Dexter, who came to Rhode Island in 1643 and was president of Providence and Warwick in 1653-1654. Still another member of this family was the Reverend Charles Inglis, who was Rector of Trinity Church, New York, during the War of the Revolution. He was a Loyalist and insisted on praying for the king, although the patriots marched a company of Continental soldiers into the church to intimidate him. After the Revolution he was forced to flee to Canada where he became the first Bishop of Nova Scotia.

On his mother's side Mr. Bicknell was descended from Sir Robert de Pierrepont who fought under William the Conqueror at Hastings in 1066. The Pierreponts came to America in 1640 and settled at Roxbury, Massachusetts. One of the early members of



Yours sincerely
G. P. Dicknell

the family, the Reverend James Pierrepont of New Haven, was a founder of Yale College and gave all his books to the infant institution during his life time, forming a nucleus around which the Yale College Library was built. Mr. Bicknell was a member of the Sons of the Revolution, the Society of Colonial Wars, the Huguenot Society of America and the St. Nicholas Society.

He did not go to college, but nevertheless received a thorough education, which is evident from the ability shown in his first writings. He went into business at an early age and for many years was connected with the firm of John Munroe & Co., foreign bankers, eventually becoming a partner. On October 9, 1901 he married Edith Babcock at Riverdale and they had two daughters, Eleanor Franklin and Edith Evelyn. The same year he removed his home to Long Island, where for a number of years he served as Vestryman of Trinity Church, Hewlett, and several times as delegate to the Diocesan Convention.

From his early youth he was interested in natural history, and he was one of very few ornithologists of his time who habitually used the field glass more than the gun and kept daily lists of every species seen. His hearing in those days was especially acute and discriminating, so that he was often able to pick out a low, lisping note from a loud medley of bird song. His Riverdale diaries were kept with great faithfulness and care and are extremely interesting to us, showing as they do the conditions existing about New York City fifty years ago before the natural bird haunts had been destroyed by the grasping tentacles of civilization. (It is planned to publish an abstract of these records at an early date.) But he also made an interesting collection of local birds, which has been presented to Vassar Institute, Poughkeepsie, N. Y. During the spring migration period he sent a postcard almost daily to Dr. A. K. Fisher, who lived about twenty miles to the northward, giving the species seen for the first time on that particular morning. In the autumn migration the compliment was reversed and he would receive a notice of the species which he might expect to see the following day.

Through his activity over the area which he studied, he from time to time made very interesting records. For years, however, he was unable to find the Yellow Rail, until one morning while

hurrying to the train he found a beautiful specimen, lying in the middle of a narrow path, killed by striking telegraph wires. In the month of April following the severe winter of 1874-75, which brought many northern birds to the lower Hudson Valley, he found close to his house the nest and eggs of the erratic Red Cross-bill.

On one occasion he and Dr. Fisher spent the night in a rickety shack on Slide Mountain, in the Catskills, so as to be present at the chorus of bird song at dawn. On the way up the mountain they had seen several dead porcupines along the trail and Mr. Bicknell was indignant that the helpless animals should be wantonly killed. The early part of the night was enlivened by a violent thunderstorm. Towards morning Dr. Fisher was awakened by a loud racket and in the dim light witnessed the demise of a porcupine which had persisted in trying to climb across Mr. Bicknell's face, and little was said thereafter when dead porcupines were encountered.

In 1878 his first technical paper, "Evidences of the Carolinian Fauna in the Lower Hudson Valley," appeared in the 'Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club,' when he was only eighteen years old. In the same year he was one of ten naturalists who organized the Linnaean Society of New York and he was its president from 1879 to 1887. In 1882 this society published his "Review of the Summer Birds of Part of the Catskill Mountains." It was at this time that he discovered Bicknell's Thrush, described by Ridgway in the 'Proceedings of the United States National Museum' (IV, 374-379).

When the American Ornithologists' Union was formed he was elected temporary secretary of the first meeting and was appointed on the committees on Migration of Birds and on The European House Sparrow, and received a resolution of thanks for his services on the Committee on Arrangements. The next year he was appointed a member of the original committee on Bird Protection and in 1885 became secretary of this committee at its reorganization. In 1884 and 1885 "A Study of the Singing of our Birds" appeared in six installments in volumes I and II of 'The Auk.'

By degrees he spent more and more of his time in the study of botany and in consequence devoted less to ornithology so that,

although he remained a keen observer, he made no contributions to ornithological literature between 1895 and 1917. Instead he published a number of important items in 'Addisonia,' 'Rhodora' and 'Torreya,' and in the 'Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club.' On January 13, 1880, Mr. Bicknell was elected a member of the Torrey Botanical Club and in the Club's bulletin for May of that year appeared his first botanical papers. In 1896, he became a member of the newly organized New York Botanical Garden and also of the Philadelphia Botanical Club. He was a member of the corporation of the New York Botanical Garden from 1910 until his death and of its board of scientific directors from 1913 to 1923, resigning at that time on account of ill health. He also became a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and of the Botanical Society of America. Mrs. Bicknell has presented his extensive collections of plants and his botanical books to the New York Botanical Garden.

Dr. Barnhart, in the 'Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club' for April, 1925, calls him "one of the most careful observers among American amateur botanists" and states that "from the number and value of his contributions to botanical literature, one might reasonably have inferred that he was by profession a scientific worker." He discovered and described many new species of plants, and between the years 1908 and 1919 published in the 'Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club' "The Ferns and Flowering Plants of Nantucket" in twenty installments, which was his *magnum opus* in botany. Dr. Barnhart's bibliography lists 74 titles and installments on botanical subjects and 26 on ornithology and general natural history, a total of exactly 100.

In Mr. Bicknell's early ornithological work there is frequent mention of the flora encountered so that his botanical achievements did not indicate a change of hobby, but rather the fruition of a taste he had always possessed to a high degree.

"Evidences of the Carolinian Fauna in the Lower Hudson Valley" is a brief discussion of the now well-known extensions of this faunal division up the Hudson and Connecticut Rivers and includes, among the breeding species considered, the Acadian Flycatcher, the Rough-winged Swallow and the Blue-winged, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers. "A Review of the Summer Birds of a

Part of the Catskill Mountains," on the other hand, impresses one with the strong Canadian fauna found between two thousand and four thousand feet of altitude on and near Slide Mountain. Here the typical breeding species are: Northern Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, White-throat, Junco, Blue-headed Vireo, Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue, Myrtle, Magnolia, Blackpoll, Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Mourning and Canadian Warblers, Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Bicknell's, Olive-backed and Hermit Thrushes. This is by far the best ornithological study of the Catskill Region that has ever been printed.

"A Study of the Singing of our Birds" is based on a consideration of song in relation both to nesting and moulting, silence being usual during moult and a second but inferior song season being noted in many species after the renewal of the plumage in late summer. Another article is an account of Bicknell's Thrush as he found it on its breeding grounds. His remaining papers are chiefly concerned with the status of one or another species either near New York or on the south shore of Long Island.

In his later days Mr. Bicknell returned again to the pursuits of his youth and made a careful study of the birds of Long Beach, Long Island, spending whole days there with great regularity whenever his business permitted, usually Thursdays. These observations have been made available for students, as he generously permitted their inclusion in Griscom's 'Birds of the New York City Region.'

It was when he was on one of these trips that I met him accidentally, having motored down to the beach from Camp Mills for a swim on a hot June day. Mr. Bicknell was looking over a large flock of Sandpipers with a telescope, and I had the hardihood to introduce myself to him. He was very skillful in the use of telescopes, carrying a 40-power for still subjects and using a 20-power for birds in flight, picking up and following flocks of wild fowl with ease as they sped along the coast. His ability to identify a live bird in the field often seemed remarkable. He was an indefatigable walker, and in spite of his mature years and none too robust health, he on more than one occasion made younger men

work hard to keep up with him over the soft sand and wet marshes of the twelve-mile round trip from Long Beach Station to the eastern end of the beach and back.

Mr. Bicknell was very modest and retiring, seldom went to scientific meetings or mingled with his fellow naturalists, and cared nothing for clubs and social diversion. Low voiced and quiet, his manners would be described as courtly and old-fashioned by the present generation. While reserved, he was nevertheless of kindly disposition and was helpful to many younger students. His system of tabulating his records was a model of accuracy and lucidity and I adopted it at once for my own use. He intended to publish his Riverdale notes, but unfortunately did not live to have this hope fulfilled.

I am indebted to Dr. Barnhart for much of my information, gleaned from his memorial in the 'Bulletin of the Torrey Botanical Club,' as well as for the bibliography of his ornithological writings appended hereto, and also to Dr. Fisher, who was his neighbor for many years.

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Birds of our suburbs. *Forest and Stream* VI: pp. 386-387. July 20, 1876.

On the animal and vegetable life as observed at Riverdale. *The Country* I: p. 334. March 30, 1878.

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Capture of two rare birds at Riverdale, N. Y. *Bull. Nuttall Ornith. Club* IV: p. 60, 61. January, 1879.

The Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) breeding in New York. *Bull. Nuttall Ornith. Club* IV: p. 183, 184. July, 1879.

Remarks on the nidification of *Loxia curvirostra americana*, with a description of its nest and eggs. *Bull. Nuttall Ornith. Club* V: p. 7-11. January, 1880.

The English Sparrow. *Yonkers Gazette* XIV. February, 1880.

Dendroeca palmarum palmarum in New York. *Bull. Nuttall Ornith. Club* V: p. 182. July, 1880.

A sketch of the home of *Hylocichla aliciae bicknelli* Ridgway, with some critical remarks on the allies of this new race. Bull. Nuttall Ornith. Club VII: p. 152-159. July, 1882.

A review of the summer birds of a part of the Catskill Mountains, with prefatory remarks on the faunal and floral features of the region. Trans. Linn. Soc. N. Y. I: p. 113-168. December, 1882.

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A study of the singing of our birds. (Continued.) Auk I: pp. 126-140. April, 1884.

A study of the singing of our birds. (Continued.) Auk I: pp. 209-218. July, 1884.

A study of the singing of our birds. (Continued.) Auk I: pp. 322-332. October, 1884.

A study of the singing of our birds. (Continued.) Auk II: pp. 144-154. April, 1885.

A study of the singing of our birds. (Concluded.) Auk II: pp. 249-262. July, 1885.

(A specimen of *Helminthophila leucobronchialis* in New Jersey.) Auk II: p. 378. October, 1885.

Prothonotary Warbler near New York City. Auk III: pp. 306, 307. July, 1895.

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The Acadian Chickadee on Long Island. Auk XXXIV: pp. 91, 92. January 2, 1917.

Late southward migration of the Cape May Warbler on Long Island. Auk XXXIV: pp. 483, 484. October 10, 1917.

The Short-eared Owl breeding on Nantucket. Auk XXXVI: pp. 284, 285. 8 April, 1919.

The status of the Black Gyrfalcon as a Long Island bird. Auk XLI: pp. 64-68. January 10, 1924.

Rhinebeck, N. Y.