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IN MEMORIAM: EDWARD HOWE FORBUSH.

Born April 24, 1858—Died March 7, 1929.

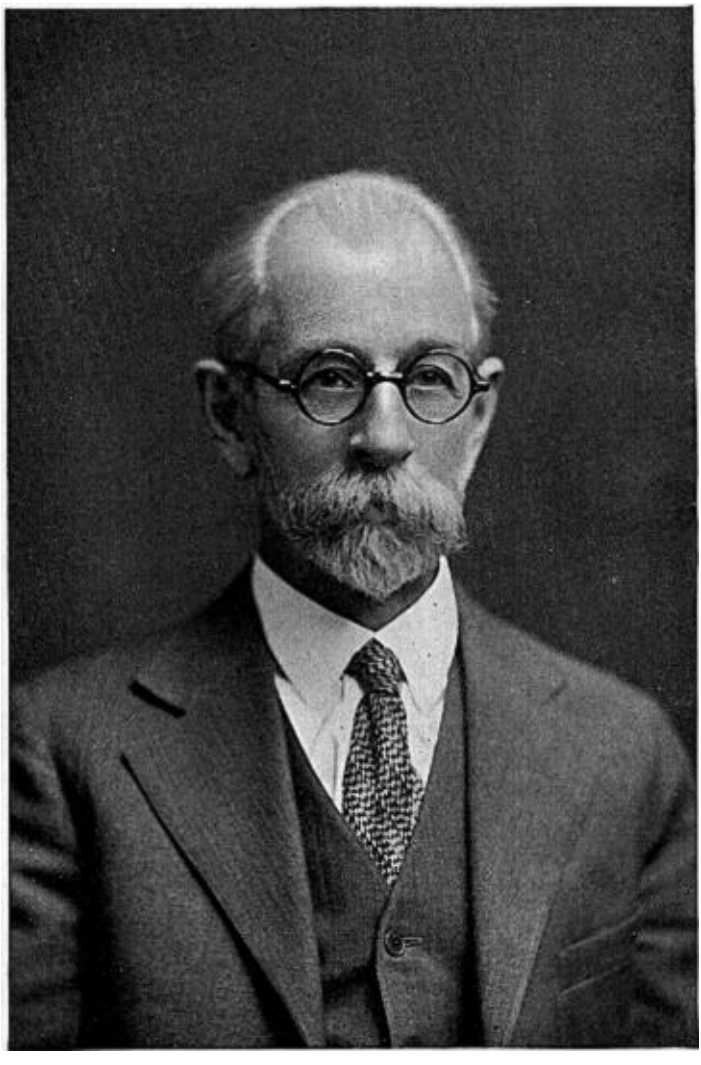
BY T. GILBERT PEARSON.

Plate IV.

EDWARD HOWE FORBUSH exhibited in a marked degree qualities of charity, modesty, and sincerity. It was a privilege to know him and an inspiration and benediction to work with him. There was no touch of sordidness in his nature. Throughout his life, as Kipling said of Walcott Balestier, "He walked in simpleness and gentleness and humor and clean mirth." His public work was chiefly that of an ornithologist and conservationist of wild life and in these highly worthy fields of endeavor his outstanding abilities and tireless energy made of him a man of great usefulness.

Mr. Forbush came of stock rooted in the soil of New England for nearly three hundred years. His father, Leander Pomeroy Forbush, was principal of the Coddington School of Quincy, Massachusetts, when Edward was born. Soon after this event the family moved to West Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Throughout his boyhood this future naturalist exhibited an originality and venturesomeness that led him into various difficulties, such as falling into a cistern, sliding from a house roof, breaking through ice and riding down the cellar stairs on a chair. He also recorded having learned some of the laws of Nature when he dropped a lighted match into a bottle of gun-powder and again when he attempted to stimulate the fire in a range by pouring into it naphtha from its container.



C. H. Forbush.

His youthful inquisitiveness, however, lead him into other fields of exploration which produced most interesting, if less startling, results. The region around West Roxbury, then but slightly developed, offered splendid opportunities for one to become intimately acquainted with the native vegetation and the denizens of the Massachusetts forests, fields and seashore. Forbush, when not in school, employed much of his time in wandering afield and learning first-hand from Nature's Book.

Like many another country boy, he employed stones, self-made bows and arrows, and later the gun for the purpose of killing birds, which first he examined curiously and later with great care and interest. At the age of fourteen he took up taxidermy that he might preserve his specimens. He made voluminous notes on the appearance, songs and habits of birds.

His father went into business in Worcester, and at the age of fifteen Edward gave up school to help him. He has written, "My vocations for the next seven years were those of farmer, laborer and mechanic; my avocation, the study of Nature." At Worcester he found congenial associates in the membership of the Worcester Natural History Society and at sixteen was given the title of "Curator of Ornithology" in the Society's Museum.

When eighteen he began collecting with the late Charles J. Maynard, but soon acquired rheumatism from wading in the Charles River. The next year he joined a small expedition down the East coast of Florida, for the double purpose of collecting specimens and to get rid of his ailment. The trip proved successful from both standpoints.

Upon returning he became President of the Worcester Natural History Society and was active with others in building up interest in that organization and its course of Natural History study. This institution in 1885 established a summer camp for Nature Study, which was carried on for several years under the leadership of Mr. Forbush. It was regarded as a unique undertaking in those days, and was sometimes mentioned as the first attempt to give summer instruction in Nature since Agassiz's famous school on the Island of Penekese in 1873. He found this a very useful outlet for his teaching abilities, but there came a time when Forbush, like most men, had to earn a living for himself and family.

Consequently in 1886 he made a second collecting trip to Florida and in 1888 journeyed to Washington Territory and western Canada for the same purpose. In 'Forest and Stream' and elsewhere he wrote entertainingly of the experiences of a "Hunter Naturalist" as he styled himself.

In 1891 the State Gypsy Moth Commission, recently created, appointed Forbush director of its field-work for "Gypsy Moth Suppression." At once he became engrossed in fighting this extremely troublesome plague and in teaching the public methods of helping combat its ravages. The monograph prepared by him and C. H. Fernald on the Gypsy Moth in 1896, and published by the State, has been regarded as a highly authoritative work. After nine years of faithful efforts he resigned his position. Politicians had become active and effective and the appropriation for this work had been cut in half.

In 1893 Mr. Forbush was given the title of Ornithologist to the Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture. At first this position was, to an extent, honorary, but afterwards came to be of more practical value to him. Fifteen years later his title was changed to State Ornithologist.

In 1920 he was appointed Director of the Division of Ornithology of the recently organized State Department of Agriculture, a position which he held until his compulsory retirement, on April 24, 1928, when he reached the age of seventy, the age limit for State officers in Massachusetts.

In the meantime an opportunity came for service which was greatly to his liking. In January 1905 the National Association of Audubon Societies was incorporated and two years later Forbush assumed a salaried position as its Field Agent for New England. He had become tired of collecting birds and once said that even at the age of fifteen, "The excitement of the chase sometimes was followed by reaction and remorse at the death of the lovely creatures slain, as I fondly believed, in the interest of Science."

His position with the Audubon Association, coupled with his State work, removed the financial necessity for further collecting and from that time forward his life was almost wholly devoted to studying the living bird and interesting others in means for its preservation. Much of his time was spent in writing and lecturing

on the economic value of birds and in legislative efforts for bird-protection in various New England States. His name was becoming widely known and many calls for his lectures came from different parts of the country. Seldom did he accept those from a distance, feeling as he did that his main work lay in New England.

To give some idea of Forbush's undertakings at this period of his life let me quote from his report made to William Dutcher in October 1907:

"My work with the National Association began in January with the introduction of two bills into the Massachusetts Legislature. One of these was drawn to protect the larger Gulls at all times, and the other to prohibit all spring shooting of Wild Ducks. While these bills were pending, Congress refused the appropriation for the Bureau of Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, and it became necessary at once to concentrate all efforts on the attempt to make more widely known the importance of the work of the Survey.

"From January 15 to June 1, my time was given mainly to legislative work in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. This work was almost uniformly successful, as all the measures advocated were enacted, with the exception of the anti-spring shooting bill in Massachusetts. All proposed bills inimical to bird-protection were defeated. The bill to protect the Gulls was enacted largely through the efforts of Dr. George W. Field, Chairman of the Commission on Fisheries and Game. I followed through all its stages a bill to protect Loons and Eagles, and another, introduced by the Fall River Natural History Society, to protect the more useful Owls and Hawks. A bill requiring non-residents hunting within the State to procure a $10 license was also advocated and supported through all its stages.

"The bill to authorize the Commission on Fisheries and Game to take land on the Island of Martha's Vineyard, to be used in conserving and propagating the nearly extinct Heath Hen, met with considerable opposition in the Ways and Means Committee and was delayed until late in the session; but the Chairman of the Fish and Game Commission, together with Mr. William Brewster, President of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and many other friends of the bill, came handsomely to its support, and a redraft

was finally passed. The commissioners have now taken, by gift or otherwise, about two thousand acres of land, and are protecting this vanishing game-bird in its last stronghold, where they intend, if possible, to propagate it, so that it may, in time, take the place it formerly occupied in the Atlantic Coast States.

"The campaign in Connecticut was long and tedious, occupying more than five months, but was finally successful in every respect. The forces which for so many years had been able to keep open a spring-shooting season for wild fowl, Snipe and shore-birds, were defeated and demoralized for the time being, and all shooting of these birds is now prohibited in Connecticut from January 1 to September 1. The enactment of this law was finally followed by that of another requiring the registration of all hunters. This is the greatest gain ever made by the bird-protectionists in Connecticut, for it provides money in the shape of license fees to be used for the enforcement of the game and bird laws, which were formerly little respected in many parts of the State. Another law, which was strongly advocated and passed, prohibits the sale of upland game-birds for a period of years. The Connecticut legislation was upheld by the Audubon Society, by many enlightened sportsmen and intelligent farmers, and opposed mainly by market-hunters and others who care nothing about the extermination of the birds provided they get their share of the birds or the money which is expended in hunting them.

"My work in New Hampshire was mainly devoted to the support of a so-called omnibus bill for the protection of fish, birds and game, and bills for protecting the Wood Duck, Upland Plover and Killdeer at all times for a series of years."

Again in 1908 Forbush reported: "A new feature of the educational work consisted in the publication, in fifty New England newspapers, of a series of articles on birds and bird-protection, written monthly or semi-monthly as time allowed. This series has been continued through the year. Eighty-two talks and lectures on the utility of birds and the means of attracting and protecting them were given in Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. The audiences have consisted mainly of students of universities, colleges and schools, and members of clubs and farmers' organizations, aggregating nearly twenty thousand people."

Let me quote once more, taking a single paragraph from his report of 1912:

"The greatest fight made by the Association during the session (of the Massachusetts Legislature) was waged for the passage of a bill to stop the sale of native wild game. This bill was passed, although its enemies tried to defeat it by every possible means. The fight was so long and severe that it taxed all the resources of the [Audubon] Association."

It may be added that this same struggle also taxed the patience of some of his best friends for at that time many good men still saw no necessity for stopping the sale of native game-birds that had been killed and transported legally. One of these was William Brewster to whom Forbush owed much. Mr. Brewster, who had been one of the pioneers in the organization of the Audubon Society movement, resigned at this time from the Board of Directors of the National Association of Audubon Societies stating that his reason for doing so was that he wholly disapproved of the work of the Association's New England agent in working for the passage of a non-sale game law in Massachusetts.

In these reports by Forbush, as New England Field Agent, published usually in the November-December issue of 'Bird-Lore' over a period of twenty-two years, one may find that he was always in the foreground of the legislative campaigns that constantly were being waged by the defenders of the wild bird and animal life of New England. Great changes were wrought in his life-time in the field of conservation. From being one of the backward nations of the world in the matter of bird-protective laws he lived to see written upon the Statute Books of the United States the most enlightened, comprehensive and altogether most splendidly workable bird and game enactments of any country.

He also lived to see a tremendous nation-wide sentiment arise for the enforcement of such laws. In the accomplishment of this vast improvement Edward Howe Forbush played a powerful part and rendered service of tremendous importance.

Turning now to a more intimate view of the man of whom I write, I well recall a day late in Autumn when at Cape Cod for many hours we tramped together over the sand-dunes of Barnstable while he pointed out the various groves that the Night Heron colony of the region had occupied.

This was a territory much beloved by him. With glowing face and exultant voice he pointed out a place where he had once seen a Brown Thrasher very late in the season and again he said, "This is, I think, the very spot where I once flushed a Woodcock." He seemed to love every sand-hill, every flat and every stunted pine or wasting snag. He was like an eager boy, and he must look through his field-glass at every bird, whether it was a Flicker on a dead tree or a Gull dawdling along over the surf.

It was getting late in the evening when we neared the house where we were to pass the night. We had been rowing a stubborn boat for some miles against a head-tide and I was glad that exertions for the day were about over. As our boat grated on the margin Forbush sprang out, glass in hand, and was off to inspect a small company of Sandpipers feeding along the water's edge. They appeared to be Least or Semi-palmated, or possibly both species were in the flock. I was quite willing to let further investigation rest, but not Forbush. He wanted to make sure as to which species these were, and if both were present, then he wanted to know how many of each. The birds were not new to either of us. For more than half a life-time we had known them and we had seen flocks of them on hundreds of beaches and mud-flats.

I was tired and hungry and in an attempt to forestall what I saw bid fair to be a prolonged period of waiting while he followed a constantly moving band of birds, I advised him that these were nothing but Avocets and Oystercatchers, and to come on and let us get ready for supper. My levity, however, was without avail. He persisted until he had satisfied himself as to the identity of every one of those ten birds. I asked him if he made that kind of investigation every time he discovered a flock of Sandpipers. "Not always," he replied, and then added with a smile, "Sometimes they fly before I can name them all." Why did he so often give birds such close scrutiny, especially representatives of those species with which he had long and familiar acquaintance? What useful purpose was to be served by employing so much time in this way? His conduct in many cases I think was not prompted by any expectation of learning anything new about the birds, but simply because he had such an intense interest in birds that he never tired of watching their movements no matter how well he knew them.

This life-time habit had the effect, however, all unconsciously on his part, of etching on his mind such intense mental pictures of the birds that he could write of their habits in an unusually intimate and interesting manner. In short, he knew his birds so well that when he talked of them he spoke as one having authority.

I had other opportunities to observe the tremendous enthusiasm which Forbush displayed when in the field. For instance, in July 1914, as guests of William P. Wharton, on his yacht the "Avocet," we spent eight days cruising among the islands on the coast of Maine, visiting the Audubon wardens and noting the condition of the sea-bird colonies they were guarding. Repeatedly we watched the actions of adult Herring Gulls killing the young of their own kind. We examined several dozen that had thus lost their lives and I recall his comment that in every case they had been killed by blows on the head.

In a Night Heron colony on Bradbury Island we noted the body of a dead young bird caught in the twigs of the nest. Tragedies are frequent about all breeding colonies of birds, but curiosity led me to climb the tree and examine this particular specimen. I threw it down to Forbush and asked him what he could make of it. The breast had been almost wholly torn away and the viscera removed. He at once abandoned interest in all other actions and plunged through the underbrush in search of the remains of other young birds that might have been similarly destroyed. At least a dozen such were found. Evidently something with wings was killing the fledgling Night Herons. Forbush quickly pointed out reasons that convinced him it was not the work of a Hawk or Owl, and when a little later we found a family of Ravens and I suggested that here were the culprits, he replied that this might be true but cautioned that we could not claim such to be a fact unless a Raven was discovered in the act of killing or eating a victim. He displayed the true scientific spirit of not jumping to conclusions, and so far as my experience with him extended, he always suspended judgment on a natural history question until absolute proof became available.

On this trip Forbush spent much time photographing the water-birds, their nests and eggs. When I asked him what use he had for all these pictures of subjects that had been so often photographed by others, he characteristically remarked: "Maybe a writer or

lecturer will have use for these sometime." Thus ever was he planning to serve other people.

Reverend Robert F. Cheney of Southboro, Massachusetts, prepared "A List of the Writings of Edward Howe Forbush," and this was published in connection with the biographical sketch prepared by Dr. John B. May, and published in April 1928 in the 'Proceedings of the Boston Society of Natural History.'

In this catalogue Dr. Cheney lists 172 titles of magazine articles, reports and books. The first publication he records is that of an article entitled, "Our Birds in August" printed in the 'Worcester Daily Spy,' of August 14, 1880.

Forbush produced three works of outstanding importance: "Useful Birds and Their Protection," published in 1907; "A History of the Game Birds, Wild-fowl and Shore-birds of Massachusetts and Adjacent States" in 1912; and the well-known monumental effort that crowned his life, "Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States." The first two volumes of this appeared in 1925 and 1927 respectively. The third and final volume, almost completed at the time of his death, will shortly be issued under the editorship of Dr. John B. May, his successor as State Ornithologist. Many of his productions were illustrated in part by his own drawings.

He collected ornithological notes in great volume and distributed these monthly in mimeographed form under the title, "Items of Interest."

Mr. Forbush's standing as an ornithologist was recognized when in 1903 he was elected a Member of the American Ornithologists' Union and again in 1912 when he was elevated to the rank of Fellow. For several years he was a member of the Union's Council. He served for twelve years as President of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and was for a time President of the New England Bird Banding Association and of the Federation of Bird Clubs of New England.

On April 24, 1928 when Forbush reached the age of seventy, being a State employee, he was retired from service as State Ornithologist. The Directors of the National Association of Audubon Societies at once reinstated his salary as Field Agent and advised him that until Volume III of his great work was published no other time-taking duties would be expected of him.

At this time a dinner was tendered to him at the University Club in Boston. One hundred and twenty-five friends were present to do him honor on this occasion, which had been planned by the Associated Committees for Wild Life Conservation.

He was married to Miss Etta L. Hill of Upton, Massachusetts, on June 28, 1882. She and their four children survive him.

On March 10, 1929, a company of friends gathered in Westboro, Massachusetts to attend the funeral of Edward Howe Forbush, and in sorrow pay their respects to the memory of one of America's most useful ornithologists of the passing generation.

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