

MALCOLM PLAYFAIR ANDERSON

By MELVILLE B. ANDERSON

WITH PORTRAIT

THE SUBJECT of this sketch, and the son of its author, was born at Irvington, a suburb of Indianapolis, April 6, 1879. His parents were both of school and college training, his father being at that time a professor at Butler College. From his twelfth to his fourteenth year Malcolm was at school in Germany, where he went with his mother, his elder brother, and the two younger children of the family. Here he learned little from books, but his contact with the German schoolboy was perhaps of some educative value. He and his brother found their survival among their German companions to depend in a degree upon force of arms and fists. Malcolm was a serious boy, not especially combative, but he soon learned not to fear a "German militarist" of twice his size. Within school his energy appears to have been employed largely in passive resistance to the admirably organized system of forcing a knowledge of Latin grammar upon the unwilling mind. Outside school his resistance to evil, if less passive, was perhaps equally passionate. He left Germany with some knowledge of the language and with no great love for the German schoolboy, who appeared to him to be both a bully and a talebearer.

Meanwhile his father had been called to the chair of English literature at Stanford University. Returning home, Malcolm came first under the tuition of Miss Irene Hardy, who did much to repair the devastation wrought by the German method upon his soul, which had been driven inward upon itself. Miss Hardy thought the case interesting, and found a way of drawing him out. Later on he studied under two teachers to whom he owed much, Mr. Frank Cramer and Mr. (now Professor) J. O. Snyder. In due time he naturally took the course (in Zoology) at Stanford University, where he received his degree in 1904.

From his fifteenth year on, he had been a member of several collecting expeditions, in which he early had the advantage of the companionship and example of such men as Ray Lyman Wilbur, Dane Coolidge, and W. W. Price. Before receiving his degree he had tramped thousands of miles, collecting and studying the flora and fauna of Arizona and California, and had gone to Alaska with Mr. Stone. He became a member of the Cooper Ornithological Club in 1901, and, though circumstances prevented him from devoting himself specially to Ornithology, he was to the last in correspondence with that Society. Dr. Grinnell informs me that Malcolm has to his credit the following titles:

"Birds of the Siskiyou Mountains, California: a Problem in Distribution" [with Joseph Grinnell] (*Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.*, January, 1903, pp. 4-15).

"A List of Birds from the Santa Cruz Mountains, California" [with Hubert O. Jenkins] (*Condor*, v, November, 1903, pp. 153-155).

That is of course a very slender showing, as he would have been the first to acknowledge had he considered the matter worth speaking of. I know that he keenly regretted his inability through lack of time to do more. But his notebooks prove him to have been a careful observer and an eager collector of birds. In 1904 he was chosen by the London Zoological Society to conduct the Duke of Bedford's Exploration of Eastern Asia. As he was under the immediate

direction of Mr. Oldfield Thomas, the eminent mammalogist, his principal attention as a collector could not be centered upon birds; yet even so, scarcely a day passed in the field when he failed to make some interesting observation. The following passage from his diary, written when he had already been in the Orient something less than three years, may indicate roughly the relative proportion of birds to mammals in the collections made by him, which are now to be found at the South Kensington Zoological Museum.

At the Bamboo Temple, near Che-Foo, Shantung Province, China, under date of April 5, 1907, he writes:



Fig. 25. MALCOLM PLAYFAIR ANDERSON.

“This is the last day of my 28th year. What have I done since my last birthday? I have climbed Mt. Apo and made what collection I could there. I have visited Nikko. I have visited Saghalien and made the first real collection of mammals that has ever been taken from that island. I have worked in Hokkaido, adding much to my former work. Korea has been the scene of some

labor, and Tsushima, Iki, Goto, and finally this part of China have taken their share of my time. In all I have collected 668 specimens of mammals and 309 specimens of birds, a total of 977 specimens. Since leaving Mindanao I have met with uninterrupted success." During the whole time that he was in Mindanao he was ill, sometimes prostrated, with chills and fever; so that of the little he did there his notes contain little. In general his notebooks are kept with great care and, as he regarded himself not merely as a collector but as an explorer, contain much more than the ordinary field-notes of a naturalist.

If it be remembered that most of these collections were made in lands settled from very ancient time, where wild life is scarce and where hunting and trapping are pursued under a variety of inhibitions and obstacles, his record will be perceived to represent more industry, energy, pluck, and persistence than would be imagined by one who had not read the notebooks. Even in times of enforced idleness from collecting and observing, as when travelling, waiting for boats or permits or for his baggage, he tried to spend his time to the best advantage in walking about with his eyes open, questioning the people, photographing, etc. Here, for example, is the record of January 1, 1907, made at a little port on the Island of Tsu-shima, where the crew of the small craft on which he was voyaging, had landed to beguile twenty-four hours in drinking sake. After describing the outlook from a hill he had climbed with his Japanese hunter, he goes on:

"From our hilltop we wandered on down a trail singing and whistling, till we met a man on horseback and another on foot. The horseman dismounted and bowed, then passed on. The man on foot paused and addressed us. He was a funny old fellow with a bald head. Orii answered, told him our business, and asked him about animals. His answers were not very clear, as he had had too much sake. However we gathered that one of his neighbors had recently killed a wildcat, and the old man thought possibly it was still unskinned. We asked directions and were told to go to the next village and ask for his house (his name, he said, was 'Man of the Shining Head' and he was distinguished as the best drinker in his village). We found the owner of the cat (which was skinned). I bought the skin for two yen, and asked about the body. It had been given away. We went to the neighbor who had received it and found that he had eaten part of the cat and buried the head and vertebrae. To dig the thing up was the work of a moment, and we were in possession of scientific evidence of the presence of the wildcat on Tsu-shima."

To give some idea of his method, I copy a few of his notes on birds, all taken from his diary of the two years, 1904-1906. His later notebooks, which I have not yet read, may contain observations of still greater interest. Here is a list of birds secured in Korea between August and December, 1905:

Brown-eared bulbul, blue flycatcher, Siberian tit, white eye, Japanese tit, green-finch, *Iyngipicus*, red-bellied woodpecker, slender-billed nuthatch, pigmy nuthatch, nightingale (warbler), owl, Quelpart shrike, gray robin-like thrush, robin, wren, jay, magpie, small yellowish brown-breasted finch, brown-headed shrike, skylark, large blue-grey shrike, Korean sparrow, long-billed sparrow (bunting?), black-throated sparrow, crossbill, purple finch, rosy-tinted tit, marsh tit, redstart, dipper, water-ousel, bullfinch, pipit, *Iyngipicus* sp. The following were only observed:

Crow, large hawk, small kingfisher, white and black wagtail, pheasant, quail, swallow, creeper, large pigeon, *Picus martius*.

At Obu, Aichi-ken, Central Japan, January 9, 1905:

"Again my traps brought only the common mouse of the rice-fields. So I have decided to leave this place for Nara tomorrow. After noon we went out to take some photographs, and I made several exposures showing the infertile hills which characterize the place. They prove to be of conglomerate and sedimentary formation. When returning through the low bushes which cover the hills, a small bird flew up before me. This I shot and found to be new to my collection. In appearance it is much like a creeper, but has a shorter and stouter bill and lacks the stiff, pointed tail-feathers of that bird. The tail-feathers are marked with black bars. It seems to be a thrush. At first it flew up just before my feet. I watched the spot where it lit and followed. It did not move, for when I approached near I saw it upon the ground. I retreated to a good shooting distance, the bird watching me and moving only its head. The bushes among which I found this bird were low stunted pines and junipers, scarcely more than knee high."

On the hill of Mitake (about 2600 feet high), Kochi-ken, Shikoku, March 7, 1905:

"Last evening we shot on Mitake a bird new to my collection. It is probably a bullfinch. To-day we shot another of the same species, but marked with a beautiful rosy wash. It is probably a male, the less gayly colored one, a female. In this bird, the male, the head, wings and tail are black, back and scapulars grey, rump white, bill black. Cheeks rosy, this color extending over throat, but separated from bill by wide line of black. Breast and sides are grey, washed with rosy. Belly and under tail-coverts greyish-white."

There are hundreds of notes similar to the above; there is not space here for others. His later notebooks, especially those of his South American trips, should contain notes that would interest readers of THE CONDOR.

In 1908, returning from his long journeying in Asia, he went to Europe with his mother, and there, in the intervals of travel, he did a certain amount of work upon his own collections, which were regarded by Mr. Oldfield Thomas as of great value to science and, in some respects, the completest in the Museum. I regret that I cannot at this writing quote the exact words in which Mr. Thomas congratulated Malcolm most warmly upon the success of his expedition. In 1909-10 he again went to Asia in the same service, travelling extensively through China, in the desert to the north beyond the Great Wall, and in the mountains on the border of Thibet.

In later years he went twice to South America, the first trip being made in the company of Mr. Osgood of the Field Museum, the second in the company of the lady to whom he had been happily united in the summer of 1913. From the second trip he returned with health much impaired from the effects of fever, so that an out-of-door employment became imperative, making it for the time impossible for him to carry out the plans he had made for scientific study and writing. His notes appear to me to offer material which he might, to advantage, have worked up for publication. There is an interesting article by him in the *Overland Monthly* for April, 1914, entitled "Forty Days in Quelpart Island" (illustrated). Another illustrated article has been accepted, but not yet published, by the *National Geographic Magazine*, of Washington, D. C.

Last summer when the call went out for men to work in ship-yards, Malcolm responded to the call. His motive was every whit as patriotic as it would have been had he enlisted in the army, which he was precluded from doing. On

the 21st of February his life was ended by a fall from a scaffolding at Moore's Shipyard in Oakland.

It is not for me to make a public estimate of his character and achievements. He was a good man, greatly beloved, just, sincere, loyal, serene. I am permitted to quote the following words from a letter written by a scientific friend and colleague:

"His death is a loss not only to you, and to us, his friends, but to science. There are not many men with his ability and courage to go into hard places and do things worth doing, not in bravado, but simply in the course of his work. That quality we had all admired greatly in him, and we all had hoped that with leisure and quiet he would produce some literary work that would make his fame." I may add to this that fame, in the scientific or literary world, is something to which he would never have dreamed of aspiring; but that he has left a reputation among the many good judges who knew him for something better than fame,—for manly courage and honor united with delicacy of speech and feeling. He inherits the blessing upon the pure in heart.

Menlo Park, California, April 6, 1919.

DESCRIPTION OF AN INTERESTING NEW JUNCO FROM LOWER CALIFORNIA

By HARRY-C. OBERHOLSER

IN the Biological Survey Collection in the United States National Museum there are four adult breeding specimens of a Junco that apparently is not referable to any described form. In view of this we think it should have a subspecific name of its own, although its range seems, like that of *Junco oreganus townsendi*, to be restricted to a single mountain range. This new race may therefore be known as:

Junco oreganus pontilis, subsp. nov.

Chars. Subsp.—Similar to *Junco oreganus townsendi*, but head and throat of a darker slate color, and back more rufescent.

Description.—Type, adult male, no. 196964, U. S. Nat. Mus., Biological Survey Coll.; El Rayo, Hanson Laguna Mountains, northern Lower California; June 4, 1905; E. W. Nelson and E. A. Goldman; original number, 11276. Pileum, sides of head and of neck, together with cervix, rather brownish dark mouse gray; back between sayal brown and buffy brown; scapulars and lower back, hair brown; rump between neutral gray and mouse gray; upper tail-coverts deep mouse gray; tail fuscous, the two outer pairs of rectrices white, the third pair with a long terminal white streak on the inner web next the shaft, also a little white on the basal outer web (only one side); wing-quills fuscous, narrowly edged externally with neutral gray; greater and median coverts, between chaetura drab and deep mouse gray, their outer edges hair brown; lesser coverts rather brownish neutral gray; chin and throat rather brownish dark mouse gray; breast, abdomen, and crissum, dull white; sides and flanks vinaceous buff; thighs fuscous; lining of wing pallid neutral gray, the centers of the feathers and the edge of the wing deep mouse gray.

Measurements.—Male (four specimens, from the Hanson Laguna Mountains, northern Lower California): wing, 76-80.5 (average, 77.3 mm.); tail, 66.5-71.5 (68.3); exposed culmen, 10.2-11 (10.8); tarsus, 20-21 (20.5); middle toe without claw, 13.3-15 (13.9).

Geographic Distribution.—Hanson Laguna Mountains, northern Lower California.