

helped in checking references in the library of the California Academy of Sciences and Dr. L. G. Hertlein assisted with the translation of Lichtenstein's difficult German.—G. D. HANNA, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, May 25, 1931.*

A Near-Tragedy Due to Bird Banding.—A few days after the exhibition of bird-banding equipment at the 1931 Annual Meeting of the Cooper Club, the writer chanced upon a story that should be of interest to all, and of particular interest to bird banders. Before quoting it from the original, the following paragraphs of historical introduction are in order.

In the summer of 1881 Mohammed Ahmed, an Arab religious reformer then living at Abbas Island on the White Nile above Khartum, began to preach resistance to the Egyptian government of the Sudan. In August a small expedition was therefore sent to apprehend him and his band of followers.

This force was ambushed and annihilated on its arrival at Abbas, and Mohammed and his followers took flight westward across the Nile into the Province of Kordofan, where, proclaiming himself the Mahdi (or Mohammedan Messiah), he preached a Jihad or holy war, recruited a large following, defeated and killed or captured all forces sent against him, and finally gathered sufficient force to march on Khartum, capital and military headquarters of the Sudan.

The growing strength of the Mahdi in Kordofan completely isolated the Egyptian forces to the west of it in the Province of Darfur, westward province of the Sudan. These forces in Darfur were under the command of Rudolph Slatin, better known to the world as Slatin Pasha, an Austrian officer in the service of the Khedive. By December, 1883, all hope of relief having vanished, Slatin surrendered and was handed over by the Mahdi, as slave and retainer, to the Khalifa Abdullahi. Khartum was besieged and fell, and General Gordon was murdered, on January 26, 1885, and from that day until September 2, 1898, when defeated and destroyed by General Kitchener at the Battle of Omdurman, Dervish power ruled the Sudan. An incident of this rule (first under the Mahdi, and then under his successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi) was a reduction in the population by war and pestilence from 8,525,000 to 1,870,000.

An attempt to send a letter to Gordon before the siege resulted in Slatin being loaded with chains, and later attempts of his friends and the Egyptian Government to communicate with him placed him in such increasing danger that he dreaded above all things having to translate to the Khalifa any communication intercepted from the outer world.

The following incident¹, then, really capped the climax.

"One day, in the month of December, 1892, when I had just left the Khalifa's door to take a short rest, one of the mulazemin summoned me to the Khalifa's presence. I found him in the reception-room, surrounded by his Kadis, and the threats and reprimands which I had received on the occasion of Taib Haj Ali's calumny were still fresh in my mind. I was therefore considerably dismayed when the Khalifa, without returning my salute, ordered me to take my seat amongst the judges. 'Take this thing,' said he, after a short pause, and in a very severe tone, 'and see what it contains.' I at once arose and took in both hands the object he gave me, and then sat down again. It consisted of a brass ring of about four centimetres in diameter, attached to which was a small metal case about the size and shape of a revolver cartridge. An attempt had been made to open it, and I could plainly see that it contained a paper. This was indeed an anxious moment for me. Could it be a letter from my relations, or from the Egyptian Government, and had the messenger who brought it been captured? Whilst I was engaged in opening the case with the knife which had been given me, I turned over in my mind how I should act, and what I should say; and, as good luck would have it, I had not on this occasion to have recourse to dissimulation. Pulling out two small papers and opening them, I found inscribed on them, in minute but legible handwriting, in the German, French, English, and Russian languages, the following:

¹ Slatin Pasha: Fire and Sword in The Sudan, pp. 298-300.

"This crane has been bred and brought up on my estate at Ascania Nova, in the Province of Tauride, in South Russia. Whoever catches or kills this bird is requested to communicate with me, and inform me where it occurred.

"(Signed) F. R. FALZ-FEIN.

"September, 1892.'

"I now raised my head, which hitherto I had kept closely bent down; and the Khalifa asked, 'Well, what do the papers contain?' 'Sire,' I replied, 'this case must have been fastened to the neck of a bird which has been killed. Its owner, who lives in Europe, has requested that anyone who finds the bird should let him know where it was caught or killed.' 'You have spoken the truth,' said the Khalifa, in a somewhat more amiable tone; 'the bird was killed by a Shaigi near Dongola, and the cartridge case was found attached to its neck. He took it to the Emir Yunes, whose secretary was unable to decipher the writing of the Christian, and he therefore forwarded it to me. Tell me now what is written on the paper?' I translated the message, word for word, and, at the Khalifa's command, also tried to describe the geographical position of the country from which the bird had come, and the distance it had traveled before it was killed. 'This is one of the many devilries of those unbelievers,' he said, at last, 'who waste their time in such useless nonsense. A Mohammedan would never have attempted to do such a thing.'

"He then ordered me to hand over the case to his secretary, and signed to me to withdraw, but I managed to take one more hurried glance at the paper: Ascania Nova, Tauride, South Russia, I repeated over and over again to imprint it on my memory. The mulazemin at the door anxiously awaited my return, and when I came out from the presence of my tyrannical master with a placid countenance they seemed greatly pleased. On my way to my house I continued to repeat to myself the name of the writer and his residence, and determined that should Providence ever grant me my freedom I should not fail to let him know what had happened to his bird."

On February 20, 1895, about two years later, Slatin Pasha escaped from Omdurman, and after a soul-trying flight through the desert reached Assuan, upper Egypt, on the 16th of March, proceeding thence to Cairo. The end of this incident is quoted from his own words.

"A few days after my arrival, when seated on the balcony of the Agency, and looking down on the garden all fresh with the verdure of spring, I espied a tame heron stalking across the flower-beds. Instantly I thought of Falz-Fein of Ascania Nova, in Tauride, South Russia, and I hurried to my room, and then and there wrote to him a full account of the crane which he had released in 1892, and which had been killed in Dar Shaigia. It was the greatest pleasure to feel myself in a position to give the former owner of the bird an accurate account of what had happened; and soon afterwards I received a reply from Mr. Falz-Fein, who possesses a large estate in the Crimea, thanking me warmly for my letter, and inviting me to pay him a visit, which, unfortunately, the numerous calls on my time have hitherto prevented me from accepting."—F. H. FOWLER, *Palo Alto, California, May 19, 1931.*

The Dwarf Cowbird in San Benito County, California.—On May 10, 1931, H. W. Carriger while collecting along the San Benito River near Betabel located a nest of the Golden Pileolated Warbler (*Wilsonia pusilla chryseola*) with one egg of the warbler and one egg of the Dwarf Cowbird (*Molothrus ater obscurus*). This he left undisturbed and very kindly turned over his interest in the find to the writer who collected the completed set on May 15, when it contained two eggs of the warbler and the cowbird's egg. The egg of the parasite was found to be the farthest advanced in incubation. Four eggs constitute a normal set for this warbler and one or more eggs may have been destroyed by the cowbird at the time of its own laying. The nest was typical of this warbler and was concealed twelve inches up in poison oak. This is our first record of the cowbird for this section. As yet no birds have been noted.—W. E. ENGLISH, *Gilroy, California, June 22, 1931.*

Black-footed Albatross on San Francisco Bay.—For several years past I have kept careful record of the birds seen in my daily "commuting" across San Francisco Bay,