

MY SET OF HALIÆTUS LEUCOCEPHALUS.

BY LE GRAND THEODORE MEYER.

While comfortably seated in my home-like boarding place, with a good cheery coal fire, reading a southern paper, my eye chanced to light upon the following item :



BALD EAGLE.

“For a number of years, a pair of Bald Eagles have nested within five miles of this city, near a negro settlement.”

Being somewhat of a traveler, my mind was instantly made up ; for I had long wanted to pass the winter in the south ; and in looking over my fair collection of eggs, there always seemed to be an indescribable longing when I thought of how a set of Bald Eagle’s eggs would improve it, and how a rival collector asserted his claim to a set of two, obtained at a momentary risk of his life.

To go to Southern Georgia was my sudden resolve ; so accordingly, I packed my valise, including a set of overalls (necessary Oological instruments) and a .38 calibre magazine rifle, going more for sport than collecting.

A ride of three days brought me, figuratively speaking, from winter to summer, for although they call it winter here, it little resembles ours, being more like a balmy spring instead.

Arriving at the little town of Hillsborough, I “put up” at their apology of a hotel, and commenced to ascertain the whereabouts of the noted tree. The people were just over their Christmas jubilee or festival, and were about to commence the country routine work.

I “tipped” my purse liberally to a number, but was unable to gain the desired information. The amazing lack of Ornithological love among the “masses” is certainly deplorable. I remember a Natural history dealer who was worried to death by inquiries about a window he had fixed with mammals and birds ; the principal one being, “where did them Ostrich eggs come from?” They being eggs of the Com. Guillemot.

Resorting to my last means, I called upon the corpulent editor of the "Advertiser" in his sacred sanctum. He had been so informed by a "cracker" farmer, who had been so told by one of his servants. The place had been nick-named "Negrotown," so to this place I turned my wandering feet. After trudging about five miles, I enquired at a low log hut, whether they knew of the nest. The versatile proprietor, an Ethiopian as black as a coal heaver, replied: "Sutinly suh, sutinly. Hit's a fac'! De nest am 'bout a ha'f-mile from hyah. It you wish, we kin ride ober an' see it."

We mounted a pair of razor-backed mules and went on our way through the stunted and straggling undergrowth. "Yes! dey hab done used the same nest foh neah as I kin rekkerlect; foh, lemme see, about twelve, fohteen years.

Upon approaching the tree, (an aged sycamore) we found the upper part, where the nest was located, to be dead, probably to better enable the parent to view the surrounding territory. Many ignorant persons suppose the birds kill the tree; so I addressed this query to my guide: "How is it that the trees are always dead?"

"Oh! de bird always kills de tree" (I suppose he noticed an incredulous look); "hit's a fac', foh I hab seed foah trees an' they were all dead."

It was plain to be seen that the nest was genuine; so I secured board at my guide's mansion (?) and determined to await proceedings. With naturalistic delight, day after day, I would sit hidden and watch the Eagles (the King of birds and our national emblem) sail gracefully for over fifteen minutes without flapping their wings.

Meanwhile, the nest, which was about the size of a bushel basket, rapidly grew by additions, until in outline it far surpassed the original size. For two days I did not see either of them, except the male fishing at a neighboring lake, a mile away. Rising earlier than common one morning, I saw the two magnificent birds eating their breakfast of fish, which was presumably brought by the male.

The female crouched in the nest and away flew the male to his lonely perch. "Well, old lady, I suppose you are about to lay your treasures; so I'll not be selfish, but wait and let you keep them a week, thereby I'll be more likely to get a full set. 'I'll not kill the goose to get the golden egg."

Meanwhile some startling revelations were taking place. One evening, while eating my supper, and the hostess would tempt the

fleeting appetite of the daintiest epicure with her biscuit, honey, milk, ham and eggs, Pompey said: "Mistah Myahs, 'pears like de people tink dat you am gwine to take our Eagle's nest, and dey want me to tell youh dat dey will tah and fedder youh if youh do. Foh it would bring on a plague on us if hit was destroyed."

I was thunderstruck; but I might have suspected it among such a superstitious, ignorant people. However, I managed to stammer out, "Oh! you are mistaken, Uncle Pompey, for I am just sketching the nest." This appeared to satisfy them; but how to get the nest was the next perplexing question.

Two days before the week ended, I shot the male while he was perched on a tree, watching an Osprey fishing. To prepare the skin was the work of an hour, and rolling it up carefully, I concealed it on my person, thereby running the gauntlet and succeeding in getting it safely locked in my satchel.

The only way I could conjure up to get the eggs was by a night attack; so leaving my window up on retiring, I laid down to rest until I was sure Pompey and Dinah were asleep. I had not long to wait, for about ten o'clock sounds came issuing from their chamber which would remind the uninitiated of the starting of some heavy freight-train. Carefully and noiselessly taking my climbers, a bag which I had lined with cotton for the eggs, and my rifle, I started for the tree.

The night was as dark as one would wish for; but in my stay I had become so familiar with the surroundings that I easily found the nest. Putting the rifle against a tree, the bag in my pocket, and the climbers on, I commenced the ascent. The tree would have proved by day almost inaccessible to the daring collector; but the thought of the valuable treasure beyond and its benefit to science nerved me to the deed.

Nearly exhausted, I finally reached the first limbs, where I recruited my weakened strength. Upon again starting upwards, I heard the female leave the nest with a "swish." With agonizing suspense I listened, thinking that perhaps on her hasty exit she would push out the eggs, owing to the shallowness of the nest; but nothing dropped. At last I came in reach of the nest; clutched and felt one, two—"Great Scott!"—three warm eggs. Was a collector ever so blest? I am sure if it was not for the slenderness of my perch, seventy-five feet from *terra firma*, and fearing of the consequences arising from awakening the natives, I should have fairly howled with delight.

Putting the eggs in the bag, I lowered it by a string to the ground. Once in my descent I slipped but saved myself by catching on a limb, and without further accident reached the ground. The eggs were pale white in color, measuring 3×2.52 ; 3.02×2.51 and 3.05×2.54 . Date, Feb. 19, '81. Next day I bid my colored friends a tearful (?) farewell and was soon home again after having a delightful recreation of four weeks. [B. S. O.]

THE CARDINAL GROSBEAK.

Cardinalis virginianus.

BY PROF. J. A. SINGLEY, GIDDINGS, TEXAS.

This is our most common species, resident, and found everywhere, even in the scattered clumps of timber on the prairies. It prefers the bottoms however, and 75 per cent. of the individuals will be found there. During the winter it is reinforced by the migrants from further north and the bottoms are fairly alive with the Cardinals. It cannot be called a noisy bird only in the breeding season, when its musical whistle is heard from every clump of shrubbery. The adult male is a rich red color on the back; wings and tail slightly mixed with grayish—a black mask entirely surrounding the bill. Length, 8.00-9.00 in.; extent, 11.00-12.00 inches. The female is of an ashy-brown color, paler and yellowish below; the crest reddish and bill red same as that of the male. Average size, a little less than the male. Specimens taken here are not strictly typical, as they merge into the sub-species *Cardinalis virginianus igneus* of the Mexican border. There is less variation in the nests of this bird than of any other species with which I am acquainted, and the greatest variation in the eggs.

Nesting usually commences early in April, sometimes in the latter part of March, and continues until August; two if not three broods being reared. The nest is always started with twigs or brambles, then a few pliant weed stems and strips of grape-vine bark are added; on this a number of dead leaves, and finally finished and lined with fine grass. It is placed anywhere from a bush a foot high up to twenty feet in a tree (seldom up to that height.)

The eggs number three or four, seldom two, and vary in number in