

THE WILSON BULLETIN

NO. 70.

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGY

VOL. XXII

MARCH, 1910.

NO. 1

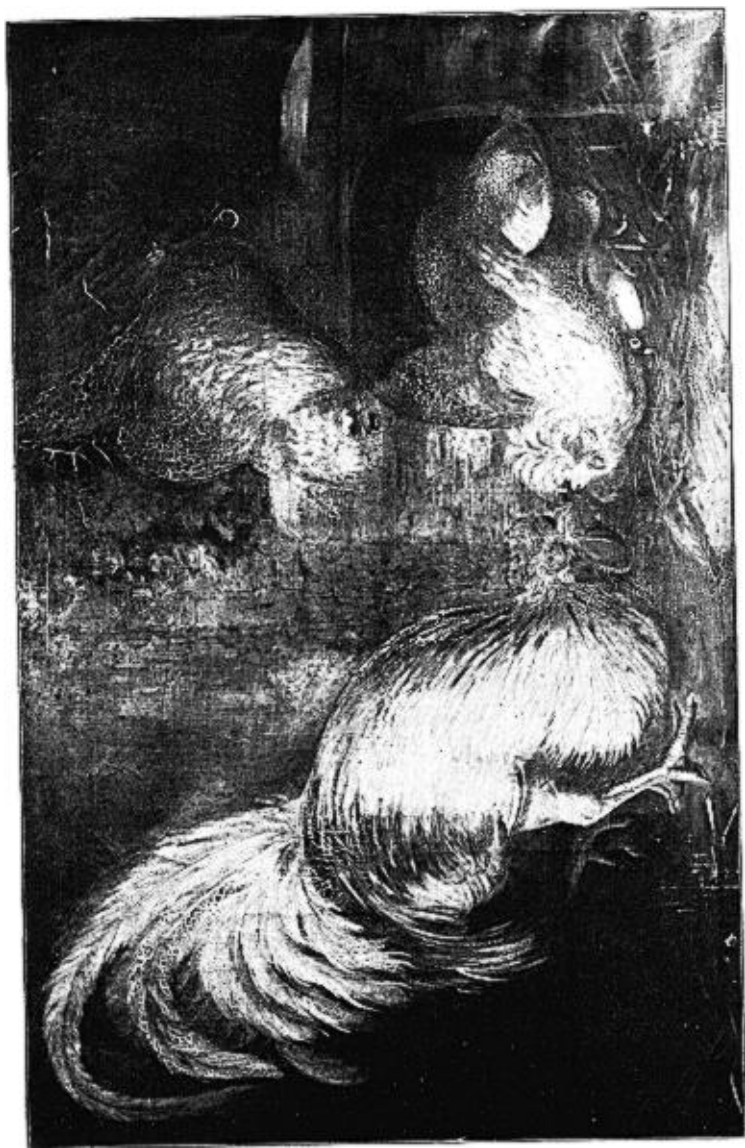
OLD SERIES VOL. XXII. NEW SERIES VOL. XVII.

AN HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED PAINTING BY AUDUBON.

BY R. W. SHUFELDT, M.D.

It was during the month of May, 1895, that the writer had occasion to visit the late Mrs. John Woodhouse Audubon, the widow of a son or John James Audubon, the ornithologist. The home of this venerable old lady was at Salem, Washington County, in the State of New York, and during the week or more of my visit, permission was given me by the eldest daughter of the family to photograph a number of the old Audubon paintings, and other objects of interest, with the view of some day giving published descriptions of them for permanent preservation in literature.

At the time mentioned, some thirty or forty negatives were made by me of various subjects, and this valuable series still forms a part of my private collection. Among them is an excellent colored drawing of the common European jay (*Garulus glandarius*) by John Woodhouse Audubon, published by me a number of years ago, but the reproduction was so much reduced and so indifferently done, that it is just possible it may have sufficient historical interest, to warrant its publication again in some other connection. Very few examples of the kind, by this son of Audubon's, have ever been given to the world, and, indeed, being a man of very erratic habits, he very rarely finished the drawing and painting of a bird he ever



Oil Painting by Jno. James Audubon.

commenced, — and not many were commenced by him. There used to be in existence an unfinished painting in water colors of an Arcadian Owl of his, but it is a poor thing, and does not promise much, e'en had it ever been completed.

By far the most interesting paintings discovered by me, at the time and place mentioned, consisted in two or three large canvasses done in oil by the father, John James Audubon, the author of the "Birds of America," and these were, among other dust-covered relics, stored away in the attic of the Salem house.

Only one of these canvasses was in any condition to be photographed, for, being upwards of a century old, it was dull, and cracked, or rather cracked like old china, and, withal, more or less dim. Then, my photographic experience was somewhat limited in those days, and old oil paintings are difficult subjects for the camerist at the best.

However, this painting was dusted off and placed in the attic in as favorable a light as possible, and two dry plate exposures (5x8) were made that made pretty fair negatives after they had been submitted to intensification. The reproduction of a photograph made by me from the better of these two, illustrates the present contribution. It will be observed that Audubon painted here three barn-yard fowls in rather spirited attitudes. One of these fowls is evidently a common cock, while the other two are hens, apparently of the Polish breed, or perhaps Houdans. This scene is one to be observed upon almost any day in any hen-yard, or upon the farm, and originally the painting must have been one of some considerable merit.

It is not generally known that Audubon was ever given to producing such subjects as this in oil, — life size, for in this particular picture the fowls are life size. To the best of my recollection it was painted by him in Philadelphia. It belongs to a class of work that he did purely to make quick sales in order to support himself while engaged in painting and describing birds for his volumes on American ornithology.

Likely it is, too, that in the sale of some of these pictures he was disappointed and did not succeed in getting a purchaser for them. This is doubtless one failing in that category, and, never having been sold, drifted eventually into the garret of the Salem house.

It is said that he painted such pictures with great rapidity, and at different times early in his career, supporting himself almost entirely by their sales. Few there are who know all there is yet to be known in the life of that remarkable man, and the making of these pictures is a bit of it. In fact there is a whole lot of Audubonian history that the world is not, up to this time, in possession of, that later on may possibly appear

BIRDS SEEN ON THE OTONABEE RIVER, CANADA,
IN AUGUST.

BY FRANK N. SHANKLAND.

Although home may be the best place in the world for a person to spend the greater part of the year, it is a very poor place to spend a vacation, for when vacation time comes, it is nearly always desirable to seek fresh fields, where life has a different flavor. Furthermore, if one is to derive the greatest possible benefit from a vacation trip, he should by all means have some definite object in view when he sets out. If he has a fad or hobby, he should plan to give it much of his time during vacation. Happy indeed is he who has a hobby which will take him into the wilds of Nature.

Owing to the fact that ornithology has always been the author's favorite recreation and pastime, he usually arranges to spend his vacation in places where birds are abundant, and where there is a possibility of making the acquaintance of some species not found near his home in northern Ohio. One of the pleasantest of all the vacation trips that I have ever taken, was one to the Otonabee River in eastern Canada during the summer of 1907. The objects of the trip were two-