

LUDWIG KUMLIEN

BY MRS. H. J. TAYLOR

Ludwig Kumlien, oldest son of Thure Kumlien, was born in a log cabin on the Kumlien homestead near Busseyville, now Sumner, Jefferson County, Wisconsin, on March 15, 1853. His full name was Aaron Ludwig Kumlien but he so disliked his first name that he never used it after he was grown. He died, after many months of suffering from cancer of the throat, at his home in Milton, Wisconsin, December 4, 1902. The funeral was held at the Seventh-Day Baptist Church. He was buried in Milton Cemetery.

The children of Thure Kumlein and Christina Wallberg were a distinct asset to the communities in which they located. Ludwig, after finishing the common school course, attended Albion Academy, Wisconsin, where his father, Thure Kumlien, was professor of Zoology and Botany. He became one of Thure Kumlien's outstanding students in botany and ornithology. On completing the academy course in 1873 he attended the University of Wisconsin from 1873-1877 as a special student in the scientific course. He held no degree from the University of Wisconsin but in 1892 he received from Milton College the honorary degree of Master of Science.

A letter from his brother, T. V. Kumlien, in October, 1936, says that Ludwig was a naturalist from childhood. He was always making friends with birds and other animals. He raised a pair of Mourning Doves, feeding them as he had seen the parent birds feed them, and they became household pets. A pair of goldfinches were also tamed. By daming up a nearby spring he caught and tamed a blue heron. It followed at his heels ever eager for the frogs, minnows, and small fish he secured for its food. Ludwig's collection of birds' nests and eggs was also begun in his childhood years.

He was painstaking and accurate in all he did and inherited his father's love for art. His widow (May, 1936) writes: "Ludwig was definitely inclined to be an artist or sculptor and he had the necessary qualifications in an eminent degree. I have two books of drawings made between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five years. The subjects were insects, mammals, and birds. Most of the mammals are done in water color. His work in taxidermy shows his artistic feeling. His phenomenal eye-sight allowed nothing to escape his observation and drawing was as natural to him as writing."

A few weeks after leaving the University of Wisconsin Kumlien went as a naturalist on the Howgate Polar Expedition, August 2, 1877,

to October 30, 1878. For this expedition he made the Report of Explorations in Greenland. (Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, 1878, pp. 452-4).

During this expedition of fifteen months in the arctic he made interesting and important collections in several fields of natural history. Kumlien (Bulletin of the United States National Museum, No. 15, published under the Direction of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington; Government Printing Office; 1879, p. 5) writes: "The schooner fitted out in New London [Connecticut] . . . sailed on the morning of August 3, 1877, . . . and on the 6th of October the Florence dropped anchor in the little harbor of Annanactook. . . . Arrangements were at once begun by Mr. Sherman [Meteorologist] and myself to erect a shelter that would serve for an observatory and general working place. . . . As soon as the snow became compact enough, we engaged the Eskimo to build a snow-house for us, in which our tent served as a lining." In his Report of Explorations in Greenland he says (pp. 452-4): "In this illy-lighted and poorly warmed structure Mr. Sherman and myself spent our time till July [nine months]. . . . While dissecting one of the animals [Eskimo dog] I had the misfortune to cut a finger slightly, and the virus (?) together with a frost-bite made me a cripple for two months, and came very near costing me the loss of my arm; this occurring in the busiest season, I lost many specimens. Eskimo women were instructed to skin and clean birds and mammals, which they soon learned to do very nicely, invariably removing the fat with their teeth. . . . No birds except *Corvus corax* [Raven], *Falco candicans* [White Gyrfalcon], and two species of *Lagopus* [Ptarmigan] remain during the winter. The first birds to return are *Larus glaucus* [Glaucous Gull], often long before there is any open water; they cruise up the ice-covered fjords and feed on the young of *Phoca foetida* [Harbor Seal]. As soon as the snow begins to melt *Plectrophanes nivalis* [Snow Bunting] greets one with a very pretty song. Eiders, *Somateria molissima*, nested by thousands on the rocky islets around our winter harbor, and the eggs were a very welcome addition to our rations. . . . Only forty-four species of birds were met with in Cumberland Sound, and at least four were stragglers. Interesting notes were procured on rare or little known Arctic water-birds. . . . We left much too early to secure a fair representation of the flora of the district poor as it is. The same species were collected on the Greenland coast . . . much more luxuriant. The algae . . . were abundant both in species and numbers. Some interesting notes on the habits, legends, etc., of the Eskimo were secured with drawings; also a good number

of Eskimo drawings. . . . Annanactook (our winter harbor) was a most remarkably barren place. . . . Did not get out of Cumberland Gulf till the 19th of July. . . . Reached Godhavn Harbor on the last day of July. . . .”

The men were disappointed that the expedition steamer did not meet them at Godhavn. They were greatly disappointed that no word had come from home during twelve months of their absence.



LUDWIG KUMLIEN, 1853-1902

Kumlien found in Governor Fencker a man familiar with the birds of North America as well as of Europe. He had acquired a good knowledge of Arctic ornithology during his eleven years' residence in Greenland. Kumlien (United States National Museum, Bulletin 15, p. 72) says: "The birds do not congregate in large numbers on the islands in Cumberland to breed, the way they do on the Greenland coast. There is an exception with *Somateria molissima* [Northern Eider]. Some species that breed by myriads two hundred miles to the southward, and are equally numerous on the coast of Greenland

to 73 N. lat., are found only as occasional stragglers in the Cumberland waters. Some idea of the barrenness of the islands around Annanactook may be arrived at from the fact that from October to July *one hare* and *two ptarmigans* were brought in, and there were twelve Eskimos that hunted the greater part of the time, and I was out on every occasion when I thought it at all likely that such game could be procured."

On the valuable ethnological articles and birds secured by Ludwig Kumlien while on the Howgate Expedition to Arctic America, Spencer F. Baird, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, (Report of Explorations in Greenland, Smithsonian Report 1878, pp. 44, 47, 51) says: "...The collections of Mr. Kumlien made by him during several months' residence at Cumberland Gulf, in Arctic America, and on the opposite coast of Greenland, ... include great numbers of stone implements found in Esquimaux graves ... also many articles of dress and adornment, implements of war, and of the chase, etc. ... A series of the seals of Arctic America, both of skins and skeletons, brought back by Mr. Kumlien, supplies a very important gap in the collections of the National Museum. ... In the collection of fishes gathered in Cumberland Gulf by Mr. L. Kumlien, while connected with the Howgate Expedition, were several kinds new to the fauna of northwestern North America."

The list of birds obtained by Kumlien on the Howgate Expedition numbers eighty-four. He also brought back a gull which in 1883 was recognized by William Brewster as a new species, and which he named, *Larus kumlieni*. Bent, in his Life Histories of Gulls and Terns, makes this comment: "When Kumlien ... found this species breeding in Cumberland Sound in 1878 he supposed that it was identical with the glaucous-winged gull of the Pacific coast and so reported it." Kumlien referred to the return of the Expedition in 1878 as follows: "On the morning of October 30 the Florence lay along the same dock she had left fifteen months before, every man brought back alive and well."

The Janesville [Wisconsin] Gazette, October 21, 1899, says: "He [Ludwig Kumlien] has made natural history collections for a number of museums in this country and Europe, as well as for private individuals, and for the past four years has done mounting for various museums, including our state normal schools and a number of leading high schools.

“His collection of natural history specimens is very large, embracing between 5,000 and 6,000 bird and mammal skins, all North American, and an egg collection of over 500 species of North American birds, and what is more notable, there is not a doubtful egg in the entire collection. The skin collection comprises sixty-six species of the warblers of the United States, nearly all the hawks, owls, ducks, geese, woodpeckers, waders and finches, most every species of Wisconsin birds, embracing 365 species, of which number the professor [Kumlien] had added more than thirty to the list himself. His birds are mounted in groups, representing male and female, nest and eggs, often also winter plumage and young, and with enough of the natural surroundings to give the idea of the bird's habits.”

The services of Ludwig Kumlien were sought and valued for his scholarship and accuracy in many fields of natural science. In 1891 he accepted the professorship of physics and natural history in Milton College, Wisconsin, and continued to hold this chair until his death in 1902. His learning, his seasoned knowledge and the capacity to use it made him a rare and valued teacher. His wide horizon and vision gave interest; his seriousness inspired work. The impress of his life on Milton College is indelible.

Wisconsin as a state is indebted to Ludwig Kumlien, as well as to his father Thure Kumlien, for pioneer work in botany and ornithology. Ludwig's most important contribution to Wisconsin's early ornithology is *The Birds of Wisconsin* by L. Kumlien and N. Hollister (Bulletin of the Wisconsin Natural History Society, Vol. 3, New Series, Milwaukee, 1903). When this bulletin was published, March, 1903, Kumlien had been dead several months and Hollister had been in Alaska nearly a year. Therefore there could be no last additions and corrections.

The preface to this bulletin states: “. . . Our foremost thought . . . has been to perfect the list. . . Starting in 1899, with a list of 365 species and sub-species . . . now we recognize but 357 in all, that we believe are really entitled to a place. . . We have made no attempt at descriptions of birds, nor have we gone to any length in discussing their habits. Our whole aim and object has simply been to bring our knowledge of Wisconsin ornithology, as regards occurrence and abundance, up to date, and to present a carefully compiled list of all those species and sub-species which have positively been known to occur

within the limits of the state at any time. . . . We have included . . . only those species and sub-species which we ourselves are thoroughly satisfied have, at some time, occurred in the state. . . . The records, notes, and observations herein given are based principally upon our own collections and personal work in the field, covering a large part of the time for periods of thirty-five and fifteen years, respectively. . . . Added to this, and perhaps of even greater value, has been the use of the extended, accurate and perfectly authentic notes of the late Thure Kumlien, covering a period of constant residence in the state of nearly forty-five years, from 1844* to 1888, making, with the time spent by us in similar work, a total period of sixty years of constant observation. . . . Besides the personal acquaintance of the late Dr. P. R. Hoy and Capt. B. F. Goss, we have had the benefit of many letters from these gentlemen to Thure and L. Kumlien for many years."

Ludwig Kumlien was an associate member of the American Ornithologists' Union, contributing now and then to its publication. He also contributed short articles to *Forest and Stream*, *Nidologist*, and the *Osprey*. His name is linked with Wisconsin as pioneer ornithologist but Ludwig Kumlien, through his research work as naturalist on the Howgate Expedition, his outstanding work as assistant on the United States Fish Commission, and his contributions to various fields of natural history, is a national figure.

In 1892 he married Annabel Carr. It was a rare companionship through ten brief years. Three little children born to them were too young to know their father when Ludwig Kumlien, scarcely in the prime of life, died in 1902. His life was expressed in many fields and he belongs not only to Wisconsin but to the world.

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*Thure Kumlien arrived in Milwaukee in 1843, and his study of bird life continued from that date. The accuracy of this date is established by three facts, two of which are found in Kumlien's own writings. Kumlien wrote a letter to President Twombly, of the University of Wisconsin, in which he stated that he came to this country in 1843. Again in a paper published in the *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences* (1875) Kumlien referred to his arrival in this country in 1843. In his "Life of Thure Kumlien", P. V. Lawson gives the date of Kumlien's marriage as September 5, 1843, at Milwaukee. This date has been verified by Kumlien's son, T. V. Kumlien; by his granddaughter, Mrs. Angie Kumlien Main; and by authorities of the Milwaukee Public Museum. All of these facts are presented in full in the *WILSON BULLETIN* for June, 1936, XLVIII, pp. 86-93.