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## AMONG THE COFFIN-CARRIERS.

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Near at hand lay the nest-dotted green slopes of the island, stretches of rank grass alternating with thickets of raspberry and waving alder; farther back were the sparkling blue lake waters, with here and there flocks of great Gulls bedded upon them; and in the distance rose other islands, dark-green lumps, marked with numerous white spots proclaiming their winged inhabitants at home. The picture was most charming, but upon it the eye did not linger, for the centre of attraction was directly overhead, imperiously demanding attention. There, in the bright rays of the June sun, with the soft blue sky as a background, wheeled and circled, a hundred feet above me, a black and white cloud of six hundred Great Black-backed Gulls, the largest, the most magnificent, the most inspiring of our Sea-gulls. There was a scene which could not be duplicated!

Not in Labrador, not in Greenland were these Gulls gathered thus. The lake in which they make their home is bordered in part by farm lands, is within a mile or two of a railway, and within twelve miles of a town of seven thousand people. Although considered one of the wildest of Gulls, the Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) or "Coffin-carrier" has established this colony, declared by Dr. C. W. Townsend to be "the largest breeding colony of this bird known, and the most southern one," in the midst of an accessible; agricultural country at Lake George, Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia.

Lake George is situated in the northwestern part of Yarmouth County, in latitude 44° N., longitude 66° 2' W., four miles from the Atlantic shore. It is four miles long and two miles wide, has a very irregular shore-line, and contains about a dozen islands, on seven of which, in the northern part of the lake, the Gulls nest. The greater part of its shore is wooded, but at no place are farm lands far distant, while for two or three miles they border directly upon the beach. The water-supply for the town of Yarmouth, twelve miles distant, is obtained from this lake.

I know of no generally recognized names for the islands occupied by the Gulls, but in order to make my records intelligible I have adopted for my own use names which are here given, together with sufficient information to render the islands identifiable. Big Gull Island is the largest island in the northern part of the lake, and has a larger number of nesting Gulls than has any other island. It is about a quarter of a mile long and half as wide, and rises some forty or fifty feet above the surrounding waters. The greater part of it is covered with alders and wild raspberry bushes, but there are some areas of open grassland, and a few spruce trees. Northern Gull Island lies north of Big Gull Island, to which it is similar, although smaller and with a larger wooded area. Bar Island is a low bar of rocks and gravel, of small extent, without trees or bushes. It lies south of Big Gull Island, and is elevated but one or two feet above the surface of the lake. Garnet Island lies south-east of Big Gull Island, near the eastern shore of the lake. It is small and narrow, and supports two or three living spruces and about a dozen dead ones. On its western side is a rather large area of coarse red sand, made up of small garnets. Catbrier Island, lying south of Garnet Island, is thickly wooded. A small thicket of Catbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*), which is uncommon in Nova Scotia, grows among its trees. Southern Gull Island is another small wooded island, lying south of Catbrier Island. Round Island is fairly well wooded, and is more nearly circular than are the other islands named. It is near the western side of the lake, at some distance from the remainder of the Gull colony.

My latest visit to this thriving colony was made on June 16, 1920, when I spent about six hours there and landed on each of the islands on which the Gulls nest, and made in each case a short, rough survey, walking over as much of each island as was practicable and noting numbers of nests, eggs, and young birds. As the greater part of the nesting area is covered with a dense growth of