

Natural History Notes.

From the N. S. Institute of Science comes an interesting study on Dendritic formations on freestone, also, on Batrachians and Reptiles of Nova Scotia, by A. H. MacKay, LL.D., Superintendent of Education, who, notwithstanding the cares of office, finds time to take a keen interest in the proceedings of this body.

We have received a copy of a paper on "Some Nova Scotian Illustrations of Dynamical Geology," read at a recent meeting of the N. S. Institute of Science, by Prof. L. W. Bailey, Ph. D., of the N. B. University.

The following portion of a communication from a teacher in Prince Edward Island has been sent by the recipient, a member of the N. S. Institute of Natural Science, to us for publication, as it well illustrates some kinds of observations which can be made and should always be noted down.

I remember to have read somewhere, perhaps in the transactions of your Institute, that a doubt was cast on the correctness of the statement made by some that snakes can charm small birds. About twenty years ago I saw a case of bird-charming by a snake. While travelling in a wagon along a public road a few miles distant from Charlottetown, I saw a small greybird fluttering in great distress above a small heap of brushwood. Upon closer inspection I saw a large snake in the brushwood with its head and fore part of its body raised and gazing fixed and unmoved at the bird. The bird continued chirping and fluttering, struggling to escape from the fascination which held it, but without success; for it was approaching gradually but surely the doom which was awaiting it, if nothing intervened. When it was within two or three feet of the jaws wide open to receive it, with a stick I found close at hand I struck down the snake. The charm was broken and the bird instantly flew away.

On another occasion, I saw a bird fast in the jaws of a snake. It might have caught the bird, of course, while in its nest or on its perch.

J. M. S.

From Wallace River, N. S., came the following observation in early summer this year.

Please name the bird I found yesterday building its nest in a thorn bush by the side of the Wallace River. Color dark slate, under parts a lighter shade of the same color, head nearly black with a lighter line over the eye, under coverts almost a bright red but not seen when bird is in natural position. Size two thirds of Rusty Black-bird. Note, a disagreeable *meow*, not unlike a cat's. Birds exceedingly shy. I watched the pair an hour, and when I approached their half built nest of leaves of long river grass they remained hidden until they knew I had found them out, when they became more pugnacious than the Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyr*

annus when it has young. Its note of defiance was not so disagreeable as its note of surprise at first referred to. I am not positive that both birds had under tail coverts red. Height of nest from ground five feet.

L. C. C.

This is a typical naturalist's observation, noting habit as well as form. The bird is *Geothlypis Carolinensis*, a congener of the Mockingbird. It is our Cat bird, now becoming rare in Nova Scotia.

The spines are very loosely attached to the porcupine and they are very sharp—as sharp as a needle at the outer end. At almost the slightest touch they penetrate the nose of a dog or the clothing or flesh of a person touching the porcupine, and stick there, coming away from the animal without any pull being required. The facility in catching hold with one end and letting go with the other, has sometimes caused people to think that the spines had been thrown at them. The outer end of the spines, for some distance down, is covered with small barbs. These barbs cause a spine, once imbedded in a living animal, to keep working further in with every movement of the muscles, so that it is not a pleasant thing to get stuck full of them. *Portland Oregonian*.

In the course of the foregoing survey of A Century's Progress in Science one fact stands out with especial prominence. It appears that about half a century ago the foremost minds of the world, with whatever group of phenomena they were occupied, had fallen and were more and more falling, into a habit of regarding things not as having originated in the shape in which we now find them, but as having been slowly metamorphosed from some other shape through the agency of forces similar in nature to forces now at work.

Ever since our earth cooled to a point at which its solid crust acquired stability, since the earliest mollusks and vertebrates began to swim in the seas and worms to crawl in the damp ground, if you could at almost any time have come here on a visit, you would doubtless have found things going on at measured pace very much as at present, here and there earthquake and avalanche, fire and flood, but generally rain falling, sunshine quickening, herbage sprouting, creatures of some sort browsing, all as quiet and peaceful as a daisied field in June, without the slightest visible presage of the continuous series of minute secular changes that were gradually to transform a Carboniferous world into what was by and by to be a Jurassic world, and that again into what was after a while to be an Eocene world, and so on until the aspect of the world that we know to-day should indubitably stand upon us.