

# THE OTTAWA NATURALIST.

VOL. XI.

OTTAWA, AUGUST, 1897.

No. 5.

## THE PELICAN.

By PROFESSOR EDWARD E. PRINCE,  
Dominion Commissioner of Fisheries, Ottawa.

Of all ungainly birds the pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*, Gmelin) seems to be the most ungainly and awkward. Its huge beak with swollen gular pouch is so disproportionate when compared with the small size of the head, while the head and beak together appear to completely overbalance the short squat body. When seen alive in zoological gardens its actions are far from graceful. It waddles about its wire netting enclosure, clumsily moving the head from side to side, and dipping frequently into the miniature pond, hoarsely screaming, and heavily flapping its long wings, the very emblem of uncouth awkwardness. It is, indeed, difficult to realise that this solitary bird of the desert has any graceful features at all.

Such an impression is far from the truth. No doubt the pelican resorts to remote waters, and shuns the company of man. Out on the secluded lakes of the vast prairie country or along certain stretches of unfrequented rivers of the north, it makes its home. I had recently the opportunity (early in September), which few visitors to the border of the Barren Lands can forego, of shooting the Grand Rapids of the Big Saskatchewan, and saw on that occasion the pelican in its natural habitat. The Grand Rapids, it is hardly necessary to say, occur just before the noble Saskatchewan debouches into Lake Winnipeg towards the north end of that lake. As our spacious York boat, manned by four swampy Cree Indians, danced down the swift current, bouncing over boiling whirlpools, and plunging past swirling eddies, we