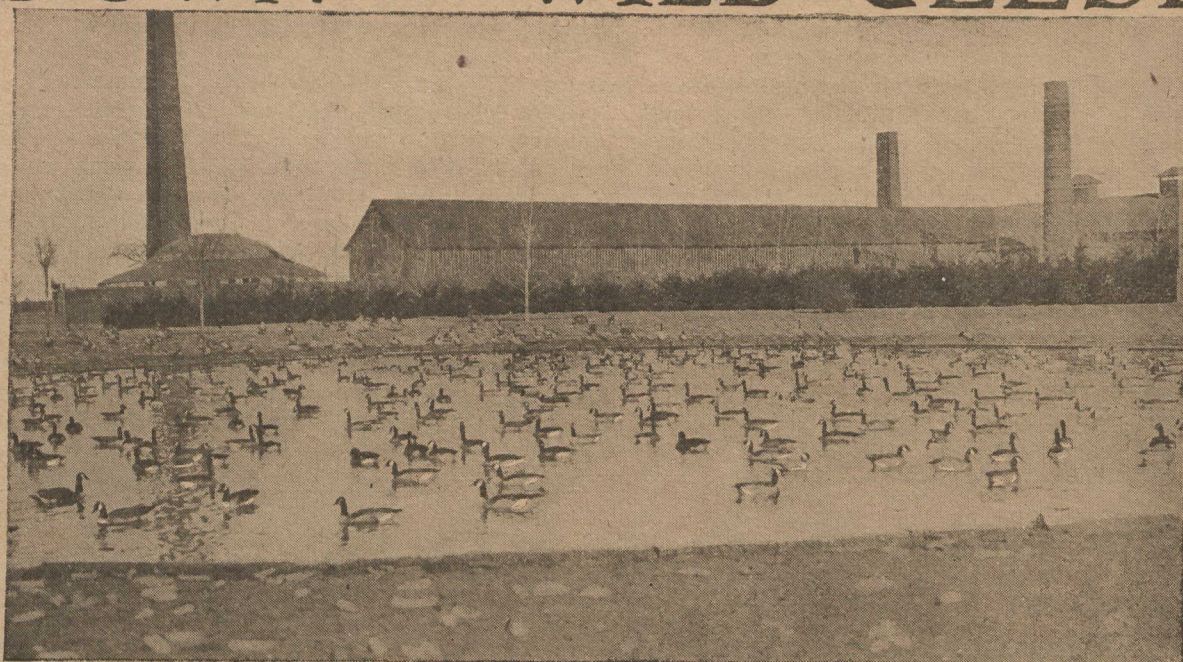


CALLING DOWN the WILD GEESE

By
LAURA G. DURAND

How Jack Miner, the Tile-Maker, of Kingsville, Ont., Does His Part in the Practical Poetry of Nature

Editor's Note:—As an original, uncopyable Canadian doing his share of human work in his own big-hearted way, we must recognize Jack Miner, the tile-maker of Kingsville, Ont. As a mere matter of livelihood, Miner makes tiles, and he makes millions of them, because the county he lives in is as flat as the surface of a marsh and must be drained by artificial means. Miner's great life interest, however, for a number of years, has been, not in the under-drains of Essex Co., but in the heavens above. He is the man who, at this time of year, when the birds are migrating from the United States northward, calls down to his farm the clouds of wild geese. Miner is the lord of the wild geese, which he has taken for a human hobby. What made him take such a personal interest in the honking caravans of the air is partly Jack Miner and partly environment. He lives in a peninsula that thrusts out between Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie. After the 60-mile journey across the lake the Essex peninsula is the first resting-place for the geese caravans. Here they pause to count up their rank and file, have a passing meal in a marsh and then swing on again. Here, also, in times gone by, the wary hunter has shot them before they had a chance to build nests in the north. It became Jack Miner's hobby to save the geese by protecting them. How in so doing he has become the national friend of the wild geese is the story so intimately told by Laura Durand, in the accompanying article.



In one of the ponds next to his tile factory, a few of Jack Miner's thousands of wild geese.

it!" The prominent educationist was emphatic on that point. But an interesting man, yes, voluble and sincere. He had seen the wild goose sanctuary at the tile factory in the county of Essex, had conversed with this singular tile-maker, and ventured the opinion that he might be able to address a polite audience of our members at a small afternoon meeting for an hour or so. "But he would not do for a public meeting at all!"

Villemessant, editor of the Figaro in the 'fifties, of whom Daudet writes so many spicy reminiscences in that most fascinating of his books, "Thirty Years of Paris," had a remarkable editorial theory that every person, regardless of age or sex, has the material for a news article lying dormant in his brain. The only question, he held, is what or who shall call it forth. As an editor he afforded all Paris that could wield a pen a chance in the columns of the Figaro, and many a writer owing to a happy inspiration enjoyed a brief moment of celebrity. If the miracle were not repeated the ephemeral writer was pronounced "used-up."

I thought Villemessant's theory might be extended. Jack Miner undoubtedly had a story to tell, and as secretary of the Bird Society I might be destined to call it forth. I wrote to him inquiring if he were willing to visit Toronto as the guest of the Society and address a meeting, reassuring him as to its informal nature.

I received the following reply:

"Dear Miss. Re yours of Jan. 1st Will say That I am billed for St. Thomas on Jan. 26 and London on the 27th, and it looks as if Kind Providence had a hand in it for me to come to Toronto on Jan. 28th as per request. Therefore all being well I will accept your kind invitation For the evening of Friday, Jan. 28th. Now by working together I am sure we can make the evening one of the most enjoyable and interesting ones that the bird lovers of Toronto ever experienced. As Mr. Henry Ford, of Detroit, and I have been working together and have secured motion pictures of the geese at my house, if you can secure a motion picture machine I would like to show them at the close of my lecture as proof of some of the things I will say which otherwise would be hard to believe. And if it is convenient for you I would like you to invite as many of the Ontario Game Commissioners as possible. Especially such men as Kelly Evans and Mr. Sheriff and their assistants. If we can use the motion pictures your audience will be delighted.

"Here is for a Enjoyable Evening together.

"JACK MINER."

In a second letter he wrote:

"Dear Miss. Re yours of yesterday will say That I believe this is a mistake re the Swans coming here. I am sorry to say that no swans have ever stopped here yet. But 8 different flocks followed the geese out here last spring. But they did not light. However, I know the motion film will be greatly enjoyed, as I doubt very much if There is another photo to equal it on this continent. If there is I would give \$100 to know it. Now you can rest assured that I

will not disappoint you, as I am very careful what I promise and I expect to do just as I promise.

"Yours respectfully,

"JACK MINER."

In a third letter, dictated, he expressed even greater self-confidence:

"You needn't be afraid to invite any person as the facts that I will explain will entertain them."

This final communication, prior to his arrival, was a note pencilled from Chatham, concluding:

"Will be on hand like a sore thumb.

"Yours, JACK MINER."

One of the members of the Bird Society met and guided him to his hotel and brought him to meet me at Convocation Hall the next morning. It was cold and snowing hard. Both were big, masculine men, but one was faultlessly dressed, buttoned to the throat and wore gauntlets; the other strode nonchalantly, with coat flying open and hands bare. He was smiling. Nothing is more characteristic of Jack Miner than his smile, unless it be his laugh, contagious and chuckling, which punctuates his unending flow of joke and story. He is a ruddy, grey-eyed man, and perhaps fifty, with the look of supreme health and a singularly benignant countenance. His companion, a bird lover, who frequently visits him in Kingsville, said, reproachfully:

"He never wears gloves!"

"You see, Lady," replied Mr. Miner, "my wife likes me to look nice when I go on a visit and wants me to wear them, but I tell her I like my hands warm and free. I'll wear anything else to please her—"

On the bitter night this year when again I saw him advancing towards me on the street, his great coat was flying in the wind and his hands were "warm and free." Besides his bag he was carrying with religious care the pheasant skins with which he illustrates his inimitable side talk to women on the iniquity of the use of birds in millinery. As we speeded home, apologizing for our dancing Ford, he apostrophized that car and declared he knew a man who requested, in dying, that his Ford be buried with him, "for he never was in a tight place yet which it had not got him out of." He also remarked that he sympathized with the boy who protested to a speeder that "he'd rather be ten minutes late in getting home than twenty years early in getting to heaven."

Who is Jack Miner? is a question he likes to toss before his audience and in reply give a brief biographical sketch of his life and enterprise.

He was born, he relates, in Ohio, of Leicestershire parents, and moved with them to Essex county, in Ontario, "when he was axe-handle high." He dwells on the fact that his school education was neglected, though he became expert in woodcraft and the arts of farm life. On the night of his appearance in Convocation Hall he gave us to understand that not

