



Fritz Stealing a March on the Much Surprised Heronry.

when ash trees are reeling on their roots. Finally placed, I pictured the lad in the canoe, with the young maples between us and the ash trees that held the nests.

Time after time that willing assistant of mine essayed to climb the treacherous trees. Time after time I called for him to come carefully down—the way they wriggled and bent and creaked was enough to scare the stoutest climber. All this time three or four or five hundred Herons were wheeling and croaking overhead, and the nests that held youngsters were “clicking” like sewing machines for all the world. Breathlessly I watched him make his way from creaking limb to splintering bough until he could see the nests all about him. Descending with torn clothes and flesh, he paddled wearily back to me and I pictured him with a greenish-blue Heron’s egg in his hand. The nests contained either three to six pale-blue eggs, or the same number of naked young, clicking for all they were worth and amiably expecting that Fritz was a new sort of feeding machine or foster mother making that dangerous climb just to fill their big, gaping mouths.

THE adult birds were getting a bit quieted down by now, so we prepared to use the Graflex-reflex, a special machine I had built for my use. It is a 4 x 5, with a Celor 1 x 2 Geortz lens, fitted with a focal plane shutter, and it is just as uncertain as a dainty woman. Sometimes it will and often it won’t—and it never gives a reason. However, we had lots of films—I always advise the film. I have now 1,700 negatives of live birds, animals and fishes. Tell me, ye plate users, how could I ever handle or transport that number of plates, and my whole life’s work is contained in a box 12 x 12.

Now began the intensely interesting work of this vagabond life. Directly above us was an ash-tree that held four big nests on its weak branches. It had held many more, but the wind and the storm had taken toll. Three mothers, fearful that the eggs, even under the warm May sun, would chill, came back on great circling sweeps and the camera clicked just as they were about to alight.

At the noise of our laughter while watching the antics of the big, awkward, jealous birds, some flopped onto a branch and promptly ejected with vigorous, pecking bites, some other male that was illegally perched too near the nest of the old chap’s mate. Or, in the hurry and worry of it all, some near-sighted mother flopped ungainly into a nest where she had not the slightest business and the indignant owner returned forthwith, unmindful of us, and promptly ejected the hussy.

“Get that chap, he looks just like a giant mosquito!” cried Fritz—and I leave you to judge if the boy was not right, as the ascending Heron does look much like the inquisitive little torments that were even then trying to settle on my unwilling nose.

“I’ve got him,” yelled Fritz.

“So have I,” was my answer. He meant a mos-

quito that had come to an untimely end, but I meant that the good old faithful camera had the giant counterfeit of the “mosquito” and two other birds on the four nest picture. One of these birds was staring down at me most intently, and she fairly tumbled out of the nest at the metallic click of the machine. So we again reloaded our cameras and one pipe. It is not good for boys to smoke, therefore I use as much tobacco as I can so as to remove as rapidly as possible the cause of temptation.

It took the owners of these nests a long time to return. I think the setting birds snatched a half hour to feed, as there are lots of places within a mile where tempting snails and jumping frogs and myriads of small fish abound. All about us the other trees were laden with the ungainly birds, mothers stepping into nests and squatting down carefully onto the eggs or feeding the clicking youngsters. The hen bird gets down on the eggs fairly easily, as her knee joints work just the opposite way to ours. The wind was rising and we cast timorous glances at the swaying trees. The one we were picturing got so wobbly on its roots that we took a swift move right away from there and focussed on a tall, slim, skeleton tree that held likewise four nests. He counted ten, twelve and thirteen nests on others.

“Here they come,” whispered Fritz, as a whole circling mass of Herons sped over the tree-tops, and four, evidently the setting birds, made direct for the tree above us. I raised and pointed the



North-West Coast Herons Mounted in the Museum at Victoria, B.C.

camera, and, as I did so, the nearest bird turned swiftly in the air.

“I guess that one spoiled her picture,” Fritz suggested, just after the curtain rang down. Did it? I will let my readers judge. Have you not seen on the Japanese screens this bird in exactly this position—the Heron with its body all within its curved wings. I have. Yes, and I have laughed, too, at their lack of natural history knowledge, and no doubt this poor, silly bird had been doing the “upside down” long before my camera became inquisitive as to their habits—aye! maybe a few thousand years before. Thus are our best observations spoiled by the subject itself.

FAR away now from rude Pacific surf—far from ill-smelling, drowned lands and shaky trees, in a humble little shack where the screeching winds outside disturb not the calm of the nature photographer’s joyful mood as he examines for the first time the prints from these hard-won films: It is nearing the glad Christmas time and spread before us are the little prints that tell of bygone joys and dangers. For eight months we have tented and followed the finny ones and those that wear feathers and furs, and if your doctor cannot cure those tired nerves and rebellious stomach, I have the address of the oldest doctor of them all—a rather mature old dame, too—Mother Nature—get a tent, a camera and a canoe, that is her prescription, and the cure is almost infallible. Besides, it is much pleasanter than going to a sanitarium.

Three Well-Contrasted Books

THE Macmillan Company have just published at four dollars Vilhjalmur Stefansson’s “My Life With the Eskimo,” and it is one of the most fascinating stories of adventure ever written. Of course it is a field more or less new and unwritten-of, and possibly it has therefore more than usual interest. But Mr. Stefansson has written simply and graphically the story of an important discovery, his discovery of the blond Eskimo, in 1910, on Victoria Island. Unquestionably such a find was a notable one, and those who come after us will honour Stefansson more than we do.

The book, which goes into minute detail, deals with the problem of who these blond Eskimos really are. Opinions differ. For his part Stefansson seems to be quite convinced that they are the descendants of the Norsemen who inhabited Greenland hundreds of years ago. He knocks on the head the suggestion that they are descended from the remnant of Sir John Franklin’s lost company, and, of course, gives reasons.

The illustrations alone make the book worth while, for they are many and varied and excellent.

Doris Somerville has written a novel called “Green Chalk.” On the whole, the fact that it was not by a Canadian author is distinctly a good thing for Canada, for it is impossible to imagine many things less worth reading. It is a story chiefly about an artist. He is discovered while drawing on a London side-

walk by a man named George Stein, who is “up against it” for money. Stein agrees to pay for Phillip’s tuition and give him a home and an opportunity to paint, but in return Phillip agrees to sign all his pictures with Stein’s name.

Of course, like all artists, Phillip has one peculiar type which creeps into his pictures. It is the lady with the auburn hair. By and by she comes along in the flesh, and Stein marries her first, and Phillip marries her afterwards—and there you are. The other characters in the book are equally undesirable, in some cases quite despicable. The author says a great many smart (?) things, if being daring and at times quite foolish is smart. “Green Chalk,” in fact, is more or less yellow. (Toronto: Bell & Cockburn.)

A novel of the right sort is “Making Over Martha.” It is a sequel to “Martha Day-by-day,” and is equally acceptable. Martha is a very lovable character, partly because of her quaintness, but more because of her cheeriness and easy settled philosophy. “There’s something beautiful in all your blows if you only had sense to see. The hardest knocks you ever got you’d see stars,” says she.

The story deals with the transfer of Martha from her beloved, noisy, bustling New York to a country farm, and centres round the attempt of people to make over Martha into a country woman. Julie Lippmann makes delightful reading. (Toronto: McClelland & Goodchild.)