

GABLE ENDS.

THOMAS McILWRAITH, THE CANADIAN ORNITHOLOGIST.

BY J. M. LE MOINE, F.R.S.C.

ON a bright June morning, thirty-four years ago, a genial visitor, hailing from Hamilton, Ontario, called on me at Spencer Grange,—Thomas McIlwraith, the Ontario naturalist.

Congeniality, a common and attractive study, rendered the meeting, I can safely say, enjoyable to us both.

At that date I was revising the proofs of an unpretentious manual on the birds of Canada, "*L'Ornithologie du Canada*," issued in 1860-61, the first French publication of the kind in the province of Quebec. It was an earnest attempt of a *litterateur*, not of a *savant*, to stimulate the listless interest of his compatriots in an attractive branch of the natural sciences.

The interview was, indeed, pleasurable, as it afforded me an opportunity to commune with so well informed a student of our avi-fauna as the Laird of Cairnbrae.

A survey of the Spencer Grange collection of specimens and eggs naturally furnished abundant subjects for discussion and comparison. Perhaps we derived still more zest from a ramble through the neighboring green groves of Spencer Wood in that auspicious season—spring—vocal with the heavenly minstrelsy of the Hermit Thrush, the Veery, the Red-eyed Flycatcher, and other melodious choristers—the accredited poets of nature.

One of the umbrageous, winding avenues, close to my dwelling, we walked over in a musing mood. It is now historic ground. Here, in 1842, during his visit to Labrador and Quebec, had sauntered the great master, John James Audubon, author of the "*Birds of America*," then an honored guest of the scholarly proprietor of Spencer Wood, Henry Atkinson.

Like ourselves, doubtless, the poet-naturalist enjoyed the song, and admired the gaudy spring liveries of the many artists disporting themselves in the tree

tops, high over head—the Redstart, Blue Jay, Golden-winged Woodpecker, Maryland Yellow Thrush, Indigo Bird, Great-crested Flycatcher, and other welcome harbingers of returning sunshine, and love-making.

Since this date, my intercourse with the Ontario bird man has been limited to an occasional letter on a topic which has engrossed many sunny hours in our existence.

Thomas McIlwraith, the Canadian Ornithologist, was born at Ayr, in Scotland, in 1824, not very far from Paisley, the birth-place of the gifted ornithologist, Alexander Wilson. Like him, at an early age, he sought his fortune in the great new land of the west, where both have acquired fame. In 1853 he went to Hamilton, where he has resided ever since.

For years Mr. McIlwraith has discharged an important trust as manager of a large commercial concern at Hamilton. His scientific studies and field explorations as a naturalist now bid fair to make his name a household word in every Canadian home where may dwell a lover of birds, and the number of such, one is happy to say, is considerably increasing.

The love of natural history is transmitted in his family; in more than a dozen passages of his book occurs the mention of an enthusiastic purveyor of feathered specimens, Dr. K. C. McIlwraith, whose achievements already gained in this field of study, warrant us in expecting that he will worthily sustain the name of his respected father.

"Mr. McIlwraith's present work on the Birds of Ontario is the outcome of an address on birds and bird matters, delivered before the Hamilton Association, on 2nd April, 1885, when the author promised to prepare a freely annotated list of the birds of that locality. He was then busy hunting up Canadian observations for the Migration Committee of the American Ornithologists' Union. . . . The Hamilton Association published the address in their