



More than sixty years ago a bird of dazzling color flitted gaily through the wealth of foliage in the Wabash bottoms near Mt. Carmel, Illinois. The sheen of its gay costume caught the eye of a boy who loved birds more than he loved school or work or even games. The bird lolled to pick seeds from a horseweed.

That bird, a purple finch, brilliant and flashing, was gone in an instant. But, perhaps, no other bird ever passed a few brief moments more, surcharged with importance to man. For that bird in that moment became a factor in developing a latent force in a boy that has given to the world many remarkable volumes of birdlore, vast scientific information about birds that aid man or are enemy to him and—strangely, it brought to the industrial world a standard color chart in which are segregated, by name and symbol, 4,000 colors and shades.

And it gave to me, in that fleeting instant 60 years ago, this story you read today.

For Fifty-Nine Years

For fifty-nine years the boy who saw that bird that day has been studying birds and the out-of-doors, writing, writing, writing, about birds. And in his work among birds, and flowers, he sensed that something was lacking. It was the absence of a color-chart for naming the variegated color tones on feather and petal. He set out to remedy that void.

He worked, whenever he could crowd in an hour, for twenty-one years, with infinite pains, separating color-shades. Sometimes a month on a single shade. He gave names to 1,115 of them; the rest he recorded by symbol. The hues of Milady's sheer hose, and yours, find names in this color chart; all colors, sombre or gay, oppressing or glad, just dull—every color used in every industry that uses colors, they're there, all of them. It is the standard color chart used in all the industries of all the world.

How did the purple finch start all this? Listen. The boy who rambled the Wabash bottoms barefoot reconnoitering the armies of his feathered friends didn't know the name of the bird. So he carefully worked out a picture of it, in water-colors, and sent it to the man he most revered, Prof. Spencer F. Baird, of Washington, ornithologist, and founder of the United States National Museum.

Correspondence developed between the man who loved birds and the boy who loved birds. Other pictures went forward to Prof. Baird—for naming.

Story of Olney

This is a story of Olney, home of white squirrels, the red-top industry; center of rich orcharding, wholesale merchandising, abiding place of 6,500 people, the boy—a white-haired happy little man now—his wife and his birds.

Dr. Robert Ridgway, that boy, has been curator of the division of birds, United States National Museum, since 1880. That's 46 years. Among his treasures in Olney is the original drawing of the purple finch!

Just a few months after that first drawing traveled to Washington young Robert, then 16 years old, was invited to join a government expedition into the then mysterious mountains of the Great West to study birds. Joy and \$50 a month besides! And right there he started on his journey among birds that has lasted for 59 years and is still unended. The expedition went to San Francisco via Panama for no rails went over the mountains then.

Dr. Ridgway has written nine volumes of a gigantic work called "The Birds of North and Middle America," many other works on birds and more than 500 papers. Long ago it was planned to make eleven volumes his life's work. He is writing the tenth and eleventh now. Oddly he has found approximately as many birds as he found color shades—about 4,000.

More about this boy who never went to school but who has degrees from universities and honors from na-

tions; who has studied birds in mountain-top, jungle and swamp. He can probably call more birds and trees, more shrubs and woody vines by their Latin names than any other man. For he is something of a Burbank, an Audubon and an Agassiz rolled in one.

Romance, Too

There ought to be romance somewhere in a story like this. There is. Half a century ago an engraver in New York was employed by the government to make color-plates of the bright-hued birds Dr. Ridgway painted pictures of and wrote about. The engraver's daughter found amazing interest in the pictures of the wonderful young bird man.

I found her the other day, his wife, among his birds at their home, "Larchmound," in the edge of Olney. And she it is who gave name to the eighteen acres near Olney which is called "Bird Haven." This spit of land, according to Dr. Ridgway's plans, will be continued through eternity as a spot apart for birds and plants; an oasis for scientific experiment among them in southern Illinois.

Bird Haven

"Bird Haven" was under plow 35 years ago, utterly bald of foliage and wild things. Dr. Ridgway, gently standing at the elbow of the boy, has 74 species and varieties of trees on it, all native. That is more varieties than grow on the Pacific watershed from Mexico to Alaska. And here are more species of oak than grow in all New England. He plans to have growing here every variety of tree or woody vine native to Illinois; already has 95 per cent of them. Eight varieties of magnolia grow in the United States and seven of them are here.

This may surprise you. He has here, in Illinois, trees or shrubs or plants which bloom every month in the year and have bloomed each month except one month, January, during the eleven years the Ridgways have lived at "Larchmound." Two years ago that gap was filled. Here are some of the growing things that may surprise you:

Mimosa trees from the Holy Lands, crepe myrtle and pomegranate from the south, five varieties of yucca, Oriental bamboos, (a native bamboo grows in the Wabash bottoms) rhododendrons and Manchurian filberts.

Ridgway's Message

Mrs. Ridgway gives me a message to people—about birds. She says the greatest winter feed for all birds is the little Spanish peanut, ground. She feeds hundreds of pounds every year and much sunflower seed. Dr. and

Mrs. Ridgway, studying birds, have found that 43 species nest around Olney and 63 winter here. Bird habits change so all are not here every year. About 200 varieties pass through on migrations. Some stop only a week; Robins winter here. But we must move on.

Pioneer Times

When the first white man saw this region, about 1702, here was a vast plain covered with a strange grass. As the district was settled it became known as "herdgrass." For 170 years it was merely native hay.

Finally, along in the 1870's, someone began to wonder if the seed of this remarkable grass might not be sold. Out of that thought has grown an unusual industry. Under the name of red-top it is merchandised all over the world. Red-top seeds liberally in fourteen counties in southern Illinois. The industry centers in Clay, Wayne and Richland counties. The main markets are Olney, Fairfield, Flora and Salem.

What it means to these counties can be estimated better when it is said that the seed houses in Olney in 1925 shipped out 80,000 sacks of red-top seed valued at \$500,000. Arthur Shultz, of the Shultz Seed Co., second generation in the business, might perhaps be called the red-top seed king. He is the man who gained leadership by designing the first elaborate machinery for cleaning the seed and preparing it for market.

The secret of the red-top industry is this; while red-top flourishes almost everywhere planted it does not need anywhere on earth in sufficient quantity to make it profitable as a seed crop, except here, in one small spot in New Jersey and some out-of-the-way place in far Russia. So Illinois red-top men maintain a "natural monopoly" which brings the state millions of dollars yearly.

Center Peach Industry

Olney has recently become the cen-

ter of a large and profitable peach industry. That story goes back to L. O. Day and to 1915. Mr. Day, reuter, leased 40 acres near West Liberty, not far from Olney. He made a deal with the owner,—used his head. Land hereabouts was cheap, \$30 to \$50 an acre. It still is, for that matter. Mr. Day told the owner that if he would buy the trees he, Day, would set out a peach orchard. He'd pay the owner \$6 a year rental and take an option to buy the land at \$100 an acre.

There was a partial yield the fourth year. It paid for the work on the orchard that far. Then came the fifth year! That fifth year Mr. Day got a big crop and his 40 acres gave him a gross income of \$39,000! That was in 1920. Since then the orchard has yielded 23,000 bushels of peaches with prospects of another big crop this year.

That was the first peach orchard in the district. As a result farmers have gone peach-wild. At West Liberty a fruit growers association has been formed. Fourteen members control 800 acres or about 65,000 peach trees. The Richland county peaches come in between the southern and the Michigan peach crop. That means a good market—usually \$3.50 to \$4 a bushel. The yield is often 250 to 300 bushels to the acre. Farm land should be bought nearby, for \$40 an acre.

Some would-be orchardists have failed, rather bitterly. F. R. Landenberger, an experienced peach grower, said:

"It's about 75 per cent man and 25 per cent orchard."

Olney was pretty much down-in-the-dumps up to five or six years ago. That was before peaches were discovered and before the shoe factory came. The shoe factory employs 600 people. The payroll is \$11,000 a week. Dozens of empty houses were filled and many more built.

Some years ago four brothers and two sisters, the brothers physicians and surgeons and the sisters nurses, Weber the family name, opened a little hospital in Olney. Today there are ten doctors on the staff. About 2,000 hospital patients and 20,000 office patients are handled yearly.

Olney's white squirrels? Oh, yes. Some years ago a farmer found a litter of Albino squirrels. He brought them to town. That was 'way back, pre-Volstead. The squirrels were in a saloon window for a time. Then they were turned loose. And Olney today has white squirrels scattered all over the town.

AND HARD TO REMEMBER

How easy it is to forget other people's troubles.—Woman's Home Companion.

The hookworm is nearly exterminated, which is very fine, but the boy element say they should not also destroy the fishworm.

STATE GETS BIDS FOR MUCH HARD ROAD WORK

Bids for the construction of thirty-five miles of hard roads and thirty-three miles of grading were received at the state department of public works and buildings August 31. The pavement sections are as follows: Route 49, sections 135 and 136, approximately 16 miles, near Crescent City; Route 72, section 114, 9.84 miles, near Shannon, in Carroll-Ogle counties; Route 110, sections 115 and 119, in Macoupin county, five miles, near Bunker Hill and Benhd; Route 2, Section 73V-1, Lee county, one-half mile near Sublette; Route 13, section 17, Perry county, 2.18 miles, near Pinckneyville.

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