

HENRY JOHN PEARSON.

A MEMOIR

BY

COLONEL H. W. FEILDEN.

[PLATE 9.]

WITH deep regret we have to record the death of our esteemed friend Henry John Pearson, which took place at Assiut, Egypt, on February 8th. His remains were buried in the English Cemetery at Cairo on February 9th, 1913.

Henry Pearson was born at Chilwell in the county of Nottingham on August 29th, 1850, the eldest son of Mr. J. R. Pearson and Elizabeth his wife. From an early age he took an interest in natural history and this inclination, especially towards birds, began, as is so often the case, in a boy's collection of their eggs. Entering into business as quite a young man, his ability and energy were crowned with success, but many years elapsed before he could spare the time to indulge in extended absences from home, and expeditions to the Arctic Regions in pursuit of his beloved ornithological investigations. Still in his short summer holidays spent in Norway and elsewhere Ornithology was not forgotten, and additions were made to his collection of eggs. His first recorded trip was made in the summer of 1893, in company with his brother Charles and Mr. Edward Bidwell, an account of which is published in the *Ibis* for 1894 as a "Birds' nesting excursion to the north of Norway." Their notes on the birds observed are interesting, and the result of the expedition was the acquisition of eggs of forty-seven species, taken by themselves.

In 1894 with his brother Charles Pearson he visited the southern Fiskevötn district of Iceland. The ornithological results were published in a communication to the *Ibis*, 1895. This paper contains some interesting field-notes on the birds observed, especially in regard to the nesting of the Harlequin-Duck.

In 1895 Pearson and his brother Charles chartered the small yacht "Saxon," a good sea-boat of fifty tons registered and one hundred and seventeen tons yacht-measurement, with the intention of reaching Novaya Zemlia. The Rev. H. H. Slater and the present writer were included in the party. In this voyage the Murman coast of Russian Lapland was visited and some time passed in the vicinity of Lutni on the Ukanskoe river. Ten days were spent on the desolate island of Kolguev and a considerable stay was made in Novaya Zemlia. The great pleasure of the British ornithologist is to see in these northern regions the summer-haunts and breeding-stations of many birds only known to us in this country as winter or casual visitors. It was an extreme satisfaction to Pearson to be able to gather with his own hands the eggs of Buffon's Skua in Lapland, the young of Bewick's Swan and the eggs of Little Stints and Grey Plover in Kolguev, and to visit the breeding-places of Glaucous Gulls, and the vast colonies of Brunnich's Guillemots in Novaya Zemlia. The ornithological results of this cruise were published by Pearson in the *Ibis* for 1896.

In 1897 he chartered the s.s. "Laura," a Norwegian sailing ship fitted with auxiliary steam-power. The veteran Arctic-navigator, Kjeldsen, was the sailing-master, with a Norwegian crew. The present writer was again one of the party, and on this occasion Mr. Frederick Curtis accompanied us, as medical officer to the expedition. In this voyage the island of Waigats was well explored in its northern, southern, and eastern quarters; Habarova and the mainland of Russia in that vicinity were visited, also the little-known island of Dolgoi; a prolonged stay was made in Novaya Zemlia and Lutke Land, the Matotschin Scharr was navigated, the Kara Sea entered, and the Pachtussoff Islands in lat. $74^{\circ} 24'$ on the east coast of Lutke Land reached. The weather at the time of the visit was brilliantly fine, and no ice was visible on the eastern horizon. The Kara Sea was on

its best behaviour. Pearson was extremely desirous of continuing his voyage along the east coast of Lutke Land, as far at least as Barents winter-quarters, but the supply of coal in the bunkers was only sufficient to take the "Laura" back to Norway, so very reluctantly the vessel's head was turned to the Matotschin Scharr. The ornithological results of this voyage were published in the *Ibis* for 1898.

Subsequently, under the title of *Beyond Petsora Eastward*, Pearson published an account of these two last expeditions. It is a most agreeable narrative of life and exploration in the Far North of Europe. It is profusely illustrated by photographs, many of them very beautiful, all taken by himself. This book fills an important place in our knowledge of European Arctic ornithology, geology, and botany.

As when two polar winds, blowing adverse,
Upon the Cronian Sea, together drive
Mountains of ice, that stop the imagin'd way
Beyond Petzora, Eastward.—MILTON.

In subsequent years Pearson made three visits to Russian Lapland during 1899, 1901, and 1903. In the first of these expeditions he was accompanied by his brother Charles. The localities examined were the Pechinga River and the islands in the gulf of the same name; the surrounding district was likewise closely investigated. In the second expedition his son, Hetley Pearson, was his companion. The Murman Coast was examined at various points from Kildin Island to Sviatoi Noss, a visit was paid to Kanin Peninsula, on the eastern side of the White Sea, and a short landing, not without difficulty, was made on Korga Island, at the north-east corner of the peninsula of Kanin.

In the third expedition with Mr. J. P. Musters he resolved to see something more of the interior of Russian Lapland, and accordingly the country between Kola, Pulozero, and southwards was visited and carefully examined. The chief aim of this expedition was to take the eggs of the Bar-tailed Godwit and Dusky Redshank,

both of which birds were discovered to be breeding in the district by Mr. Witherby in 1899. Notwithstanding all endeavours the eggs of these birds were not found until, as Pearson expressed it, they were hatched, and although the young in down which were brought home were no great recompense to so keen an egg-collector, they were nevertheless of more real scientific interest than the eggs, which were already well known.

The results of these three visits are recorded by Pearson in a most interesting book, very admirably illustrated, entitled *Three Summers among the Birds of Russian Lapland*. These two volumes remain as a lasting memorial to a hard-working, zealous, and accurate ornithologist.

Henry Pearson was a man of fine physique, capable of long and continuous exertion. He never spared himself and never recorded an observation until he had thoroughly convinced himself of its accuracy. In the preparation for and carrying out of his numerous expeditions he showed his marked ability for organization. In the memories of those who had the privilege of sharing in his adventures, he will be remembered as a very pleasant and agreeable companion, and a most considerate host. For several years past he spent his summers in his much loved Norway, where he had acquired a salmon-river.

For a number of years Henry Pearson was on the council of the Royal Horticultural Society, he was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and a Member of the British Ornithologists' Union and Club.



B.B., Vol. VI., Pl. 9.

Yours sincerely
Henry Redison

Born August 29th, 1850.

Died February 8th, 1913