

A REMARKABLE GROWTH

ON THE BILL OF A CURLEW

(*NUMENIUS ARQUATUS*)

BY

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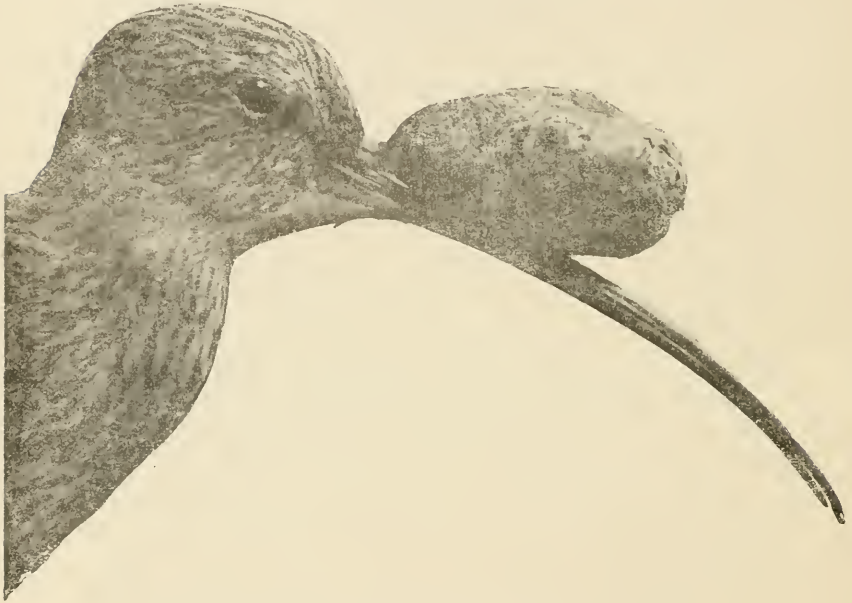
Washington, D. C. (U. S. A.).

Recently, I have received from Mr. H. H. ter Meer Jr., who is in charge of the taxidermical department of the Leyden Museum (Leyden, Holland), a photograph (life size) of the head of a specimen of the common Curlew of Europe, — *Numenius arquatus* of science. This bird was found dead in a kitchen-garden on the island of Texel on the north coast of Holland, sometime during the year 1899, and was sent to Mr. ter Meer Jr. who mounted the specimen. What is remarkable about this Curlew is that it had attached to the superior aspect of the upper mandible, its proximal moiety, a peculiar growth of an ovoid form, larger than the bird's head (see figure). This tumour was covered by the same horny integument as encased the mandibles, and upon being opened, the growth was seen to contain a pathological tissue of a salmoncolour, that the examiner does not seem to have diagnosed histologically.

Mr. ter Meer seemed to think it might possibly have been due to an old shot wound, but he does not mention having found the missile. The specimen was greatly emaciated, a condition doubtly caused by the bird being unable to see the apex of its beak, and consequently

could not pick up its food, except by partial guess-work, and so failed in the long run to obtain sufficient to sustain life. After this Curlew had been mounted by Mr. ter Meer, it was deposited in the private collection of R. Baron Snonckaert van Schanburg at Doorn (Province of Utrecht, Holland) where it now is.

Growths of the character here described in birds, as



A remarkable growth on the bill of a Curlew (*N. arquatus*).

well as the diseases of this group of vertebrates are of extreme interest to the comparative pathologist, and in not a few instances throw light upon the question of the evolution of some particular malady or maladies.

Nearly twenty years ago (April 1881) I called attention to the value of the study of the diseases and injuries in birds, and published a brief paper upon it in the *American Naturalist* at the time.

Since then I have read quite a number of articles on the subject from the pens of other writers, but neither in my personal experience, nor in my reading have I

met with a case that in any way equals the extraordinary tumor to which attention is here invited. The only thing that I recall resembling it, is the case of a Parrot shown in figure 64 of *The Diseases of Poultry* by Dr. D.-E. Salmon (published at Washington, July 1899), in chapter xi treating of Tuberculosis (p. 213). From what we read there it is seen that birds suffer from a form of tuberculosis peculiarly their own, and quite different from mammalian form of the infection. As a rule this latter is not easily transmitted to mammals, the reverse of this being the case in the *Psittacidae*, and Dr. Salmon remarks : « A very interesting fact is that Parrots are usually affected with the mammalian form of tuberculosis. The disease is quite frequently seen in these birds and it shows a great tendency to develop externally. It most commonly affects the borders of the eyes and mouth, the skin and joints of the feet. There are at first small swellings, some of which soften, discharge their contents and become ulcers; others remain hard and continue to enlarge, while still others are covered by a horny growth of considerable thickness. » As the tumour in this Curlew was covered by a horny growth, and moreover sprang from the neighborhood of the external nares, there is a bare possibility that it may have been of a tuberculous nature. But to attempt to decide such a question as this it would have been necessary for me to have made a microscopical examination of the contents of the enlargement, and this I did not have the opportunity to do.

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