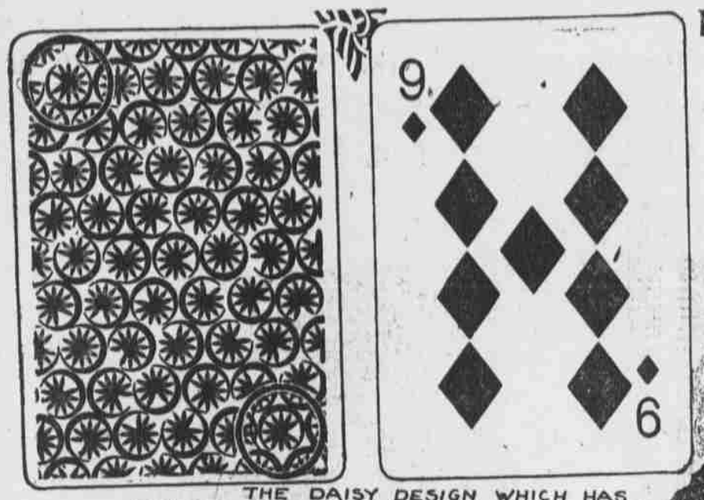
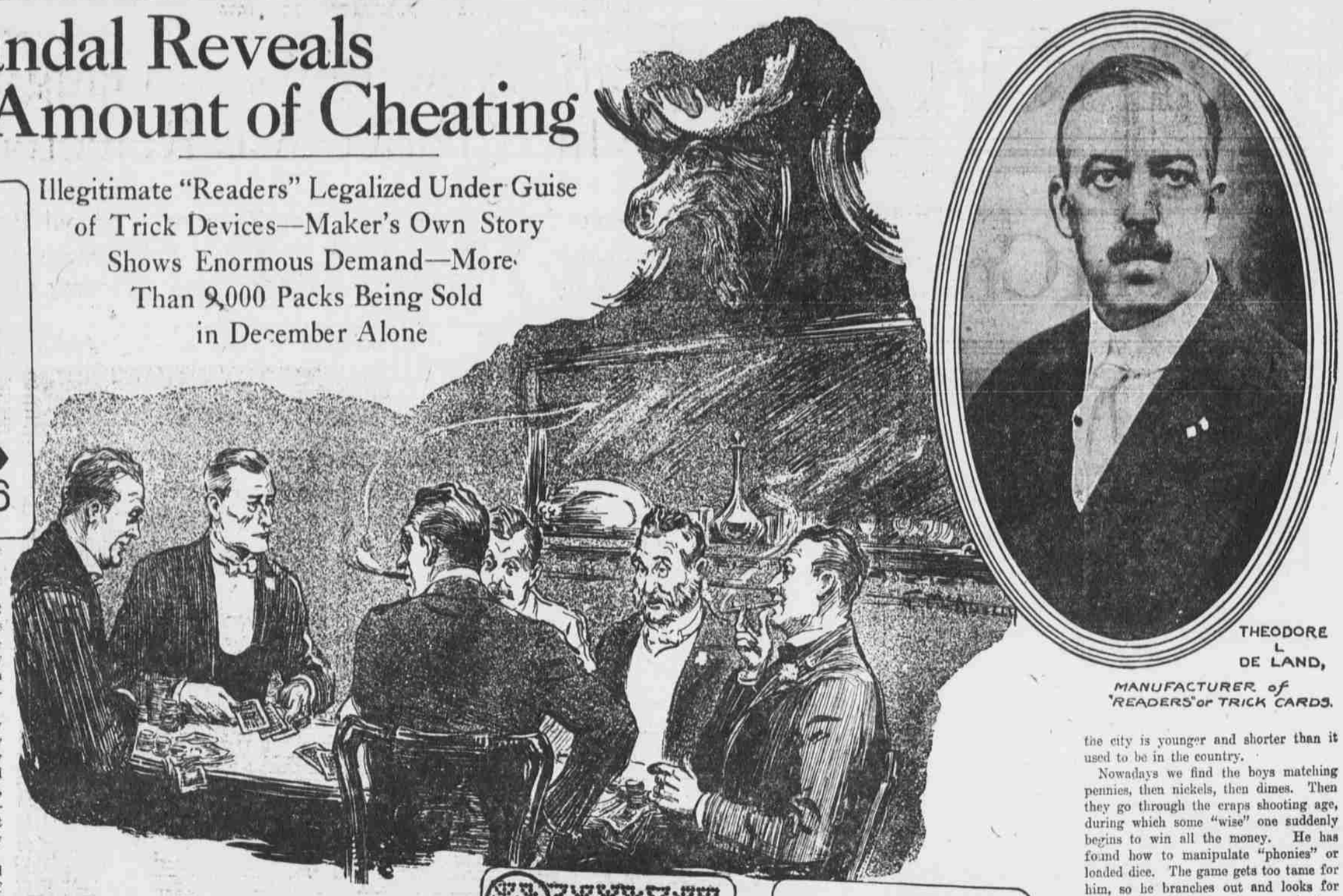
# Marked Card Scandal Reveals Amazing Amount of Cheating

## Illegitimate "Readers" Legalized Under Guise of Trick Devices—Maker's Own Story Shows Enormous Demand—More Than 9,000 Packs Being Sold in December Alone




THE DAISY DESIGN WHICH HAS BECOME ALMOST TOO POPULAR



THEODORE L. DE LAND, MANUFACTURER of "READERS" or TRICK CARDS.

RECENT disclosures of the use of marked cards in gambling games have resulted in other revelations of far greater importance than the loss of even hundreds of thousands of dollars to men who could afford to lose if they could afford to play. That one man is reported to have pummelled another man and tossed him out of an uptown residence into the dawn of the New Year is of little interest except to the Broadway gossips. Both of the men were well known along the Rialto. This fist fight after the cry of "crooked cards" is an incident important chiefly because it is amusing. Even "big games" matter little except to the members of the masculine sewing circles organized in lounges of certain popular hotels.

What startles most is the fact that there is a licensed business from which Uncle Sam collects toll, and which, while it may not have been the original intention, teaches the young idea to cheat.

### Is Legalized Industry.

The manufacture of marked cards is a legalized industry and a thriving one. So thriving is it that one firm alone sold nine thousand decks of these "readers," as the marked cards are called, in New York city during the month of December at one dollar a deck.

True, these cards are manufactured and sold for magicians, amateur and professional, and not for the use of card sharks. By the same token, pistols are sold for the protection of homes and not for use of burglars. But there is no Sullivan law controlling the ownership or possession of marked cards.

Marked cards for legerdemain can be purchased openly in novelty stores everywhere by persons of any age. That these "readers" fall into the hands of professional gamblers is not of any interest to the manufacturer. He has a license to make the cards. That fortunes are won and lost through the misuse of "readers" is not the fault of the men who designed and copyrighted these cards. They have to pay a revenue tax of 8 cents on each dollar deck.

So the whole blame, if there is any, should be placed on the already overburdened shoulders of Uncle Sam, who is receiving revenue from a business which is in fact, even if not by intent, jeopardizing the morals of young America.

### Call Them Readers.

The following conversation in a small cigar store uptown is an example of what the youth of this country is being taught:

"Gimme a deck of readers." The speaker is a young man who has in his hand a clipping from a newspaper telling about the recent gambling exposures.

"What d'you mean readers?" A clerk, about nineteen years old, answers with the question and gazes innocently and yet searchingly at the prospective purchaser.

"Aw, can that. You know what I mean. There's a bunch of saps down the hall this afternoon and they ain't wise."

"G'wan, they's all wise to this stuff now, 'specially since the story's in the papers. You can't use the old cards any more, and besides we are all sold out since the other day when that story came out. We gotta get a new graft."

"Aw, and these guys is soft."

This conservation may not be typical, but it is true to memory. From these boys it was learned that "no one but boobs" play stud poker without having a "phoney deck to shove" into the game, so it was not surprising to find later that big games in which marked cards are used are not at all uncommon.

### Was Magicians' Age.

The question was where the marked cards come from, and the name of De Land being on the majority of the cards sold in the novelty shops, this manufacturer, Theodore L. De Land, was visited in Plainfield, N. J. For twenty-five years Mr. De Land has been making trick cards and other novelties for the use of magicians, both stage and parlor, and has been an extensive advertiser of the fact and of his wares.

"There's nothing I need to hide," he said when questioned about his business. "As a matter of fact there are many things I should like to divulge but which I cannot because the reputations of certain big men might suffer.

"When I started making these things it was an age of parlor entertainment," he said. "The earth was not breaking all the speed laws and neither were the people of the earth. We wanted money, but we didn't battle for it the same way as men do now. There had been, for example, no attempt to form a burglary trust and make breaking and entering a comparatively safe and profitable business.

"It was an age when the magician drew large crowds to the theatres. How many of them are appearing successfully now as compared with the number featured ten, fifteen and twenty years ago? True, those who are showing are successful, because legerdemain always will delight the young and those who choose to stay young.

"At first there was only a fair demand for the marked cards. As a matter of fact, in the rural districts, playing cards were taboo in many homes. Steadily, however, I saw my business grow until now I can't begin to fill the orders I have for 'readers' alone."

Whether it is the growing tendency of youth to give this old world a little more gas, "step on it" and the deuce with who or what is in the way, or whether it is the fact that young America is getting "wise" instead of wisdom, could not be answered by Mr. De Land.

"Greed," he ventured.

"And mostly the joy of cheating?" it was suggested.

"I don't propose to go into the psychology of the thing," he replied. "All that I know is that orders are coming in from all over the world, only a few countries excepted. Even in China my cards are being sold, and in New York city alone during the month of December we sold 9,000 dollar decks."

From this statement one can understand the sorrow of the embryo cheats in the store uptown. Too many were getting "wise," unless all of these decks went to would be magicians.

### Tax Paid Beforehand.

"You understand that every one of these packs of marked cards is sold with the distinct understanding that it is to be used for legerdemain," said Mr. De Land. "When the cards are shipped from my place the revenue tax of 8 cents has been paid on each deck and there are included printed instructions and a warning: 'This pack of cards is sold to you for the sole purpose of use for legitimate magical entertainment and under no consideration is it to be used for gambling or dishonest purposes.' There, I contend, my responsibility ends.

"If natural born cheats or those who have learned to love to cheat have misused my cards, all I can say is that pistols also have been misused.

"As an example of my intent to keep these things out of the hands of the unscrupulous, let me tell of the destruction of the plates from which were printed what I believe were the most deadly playing cards for the sure fire cheats.

"Without a doubt I could have made a substantial fortune out of the manufacture of this one deck alone. It was called De Land's Wonder Cards and sold for five dollars a pack. I obtained the copyright for these plates in 1915 in my own name. The marks were on the edges and could be read without detection. Soon after I put this deck on the market it fell into the hands of an Italian Black Hand gang in southern Europe.

"I learned that the cards had been purchased from Hamley Brothers, Ltd., 35 New Oxford street, W. C., London, and A. W. Jamage, Ltd., London. These were the agents for my novelties in the British metropolis. Such havoc was wrought with this deck at Monte Carlo and Baden-Baden that I decided to take it off the market. Its dangerous edge reading system made it possible for card sharks to cut the deck at any card desired, even when the pack had been shuffled. For that reason I destroyed the stock of 'wonder cards' I had on hand and also had the plates melted.

### Gave Away First Deck.

"The plates were electrotyped by the Welsh-Royal Electrotype Co., Philadelphia. A man connected with this company, Adam M. Joyce, later superintendent of the mint at Philadelphia, arranged with me for the work, for which I paid $80. I presented to him the first deck made.

"While I realized it was my duty to take the 'wonder cards' off the market I did not feel it was up to me to destroy my business entirely by stopping the manufacture and sale of the dollar decks, which had become popular for parlor and stage entertainment everywhere. From time to time I had heard of gamblers using the cards, but I felt that my frequent exposure of this practice would be sufficient to protect the public or that part of it which needed protection. I continued and still continue to sell my cards with the instructions and warnings, so I felt that for my part I was not responsible.

### The Gambler's "Shiner."

"And, as a matter of fact, I doubt very much if De Land cards have been used lately by professional gamblers, for the backs are becoming too widely known. My readers are based on the clock design. That is to say, I have circular figures on the backs with dots arranged like the hours of a clock, or twelve spokes, as in a wheel, or the daisy design with a certain petal missing. No gambler would ever think of using these cards, although I know of cases in the past where they were introduced with success in certain big games in Washington.

"More important to the poker player, and especially the stud player, might be certain disclosures regarding the tricks of the professional gambler.

"Of course most every one knows of the 'shiner,' the ring gamblers sometimes wear if they are playing with the inexperienced. This ring, which is worn on the little finger, has inserted in the palm side a little mirror which reflects the index of the bottom card. In many games in which the cards are cut the knowledge thus obtained is valuable to the dealer. The publicity which has been given the 'shiner,' especially through being offered for sale in advertisements of novelty companies, has made its use rather dangerous. As a matter of fact all rings are looked upon with suspicion nowadays in big games."

Mr. De Land was asked if the statement is true that all playing cards can be read by those who know the secret of the designs.

"If I did not understand the reason for that question I might be inclined to smile," was the answer. "But I suppose the statement found circulation because of the number of counterfeited cards in existence.

"I would be willing to take oath, almost, that there never has been manufactured by the recognized makers of playing cards one crooked deck. However, I do know that probably every one of the standard backs of playing cards has been counterfeited and doctored in such a way as to make them perfect readers. These cards can be obtained by those who know where to go.

### "Angel Face" Cards.

"As one can see, these cards are even more dangerous than mine. For example, a group of men are accustomed to playing stud poker. The stakes are high enough to make a man risk cheating. Or there is a member of the party who just cheats because he loves to cheat. We'll say for example that the statement has been made at one of the games when an effort has been made to change the cards: 'No, we'll stick to angel face cards; these are standard backs and no one will be under suspicion.

"A remark of this kind is usually made with a smile, but it meets with approval, and angel face cards, red and blue backs, and known everywhere, are always in the game.

"Now I know for a fact that angel face cards have been counterfeited and printed in quantity. What is to hinder the cheat in the party of friends from obtaining several of these decks and introducing them into the game?"

Mr. De Land produced a counterfeited deck of the angel face cards. He also has a fair deck. The secret of the readers was in the wings, and once known was seen to be easy to read. However, chances for detection were about a million to one, the manufacturer contended.

Many have been the stories about cards which have been marked in such a way that those with sensitive fingers can read them by touch. We have read many yarns about the experts who could "strip a deck," that is, separate certain cards by deft manipulation. We have seen card manipulators on the stage make the little pasteboards appear and disappear, but what most of us did not know was that Uncle Sam is exacting toll from a business that makes it possible for the merest child to become an expert gambler among his comrades.

For the world has quickened its pace, and the boys of to-day are not satisfied to play marbles "for keeps." One begins to wonder what our grandmothers would think of our children.

The present is the day of the "sure thing" gambler, the "sure thing" fighter and the "sure thing" business man, was an opinion offered by a man who knows his New York and his neighbors as a whole.

"One never takes a chance nowadays if he's smart," this man, who has been a gambler all of his life, asserted. "It's true there's one born every minute, but instead of two to catch him the line forms to the right.

### Pursue the New Rich.

"A man makes a million dollars—they say the first million is the hardest to get—and then you should see the rush of the sure thing army. They attack him from all sides, and how they do help themselves to his bank roll! And the strange part of it is he seems to like it. He's a good sport and he likes to play for the sake of playing. That he loses he takes as a matter of course, as he never has had time to learn the game. It really is criminal to 'take' a man like that, because as a rule he's a Simon pure citizen who deserves better treatment.

"But for the other kind, the man of wealth and, yes, position, who cheats not because he needs the money but because he was born crooked and likes it, the gambler has no use at all.

"I hold no brief for the so-called professional gambler, but he's a whole lot better than the rich man who cheats his friends. If a man plays in what is known as a gambling house game he might expect to have to keep his eyes a little wider open than usual. But when men who are friends and business associates gather for play it should not be necessary to look with suspicion upon any one of the players around the table.

"However, it is at this kind of game that a cheat is able to play for a long while without being caught, for one is not inclined to suspect crooked play among friends. Of course, when the explosion comes it finds wide publicity for the reason the players usually are of considerable importance. Then for a while every one takes a shot at gamblers and gambling, which I suppose is as it should be. But if they would only go after the rich cheats, all sports, cards, races, baseball, yes, and everything upon which money can be risked, would have a better following and longer life.

"Why, I have seen rich men fix races just for the sake of putting something over, and I've seen them fix races for the satisfaction of knowing they couldn't lose. But these men are not gamblers. Men like that cheat at solitaire. With that sort, cheating is an obsession.

"The men of that kind were the boys we used to refuse to play with because they peeked through their fingers when they were 'it' at hide-and-go-seek."

The gambler was not far wrong, but the trouble is that the hide-and-go-seek age of the city is younger and shorter than it used to be in the country.

Nowadays we find the boys matching pennies, then nickels, then dimes. Then they go through the craps shooting age, during which some "wise" one suddenly begins to win all the money. He has found how to manipulate "phonies" or loaded dice. The game gets too tame for him, so he branches out and looks for "saps" or "suckers" or "easy marks," or whatever he chooses to call the "boobs" from whom he is sure to win unless found out.

A policeman who seems to take a delight in breaking up alley games of craps was asked one day why he didn't "let the little fellows play." "They aren't really doing any harm," said the interested bystander, who added, "I was a kid once myself."

"Not doing any harm!" exclaimed the guardian of the alley. "With one of them in there workin' a pair of loaded dice on the little fellows who need every penny they make? Harm! I'll show them." And he did.

### Now the Poker Games.

With the passing of the alley dice game comes the poker game. Young America learns quickly, everything, the good and the bad, and so it is natural he should learn how to cheat.

So in the next stage we find a quiet Sunday afternoon game in the rooms of the Blackbird Social and Athletic Club. The athletic equipment usually is a set of broken indian clubs and the decoration a faded chromo of John L. Sullivan. The game—stud poker—is the regular Sunday afternoon programme. The week's pay usually is the stake of each player and freezeout has the call. Which means that the play is to continue until one man has all the money.

Is it any wonder that on a bright Sunday evening one of the members of the club finds himself in the alley wondering what happened to him?

He shakes himself back to earth, so to speak, and goes home. He has taken a beating; he has been called a cheat and he has been thrown out of the club, but he has a bank roll. That is the main thing to a youth of his training.

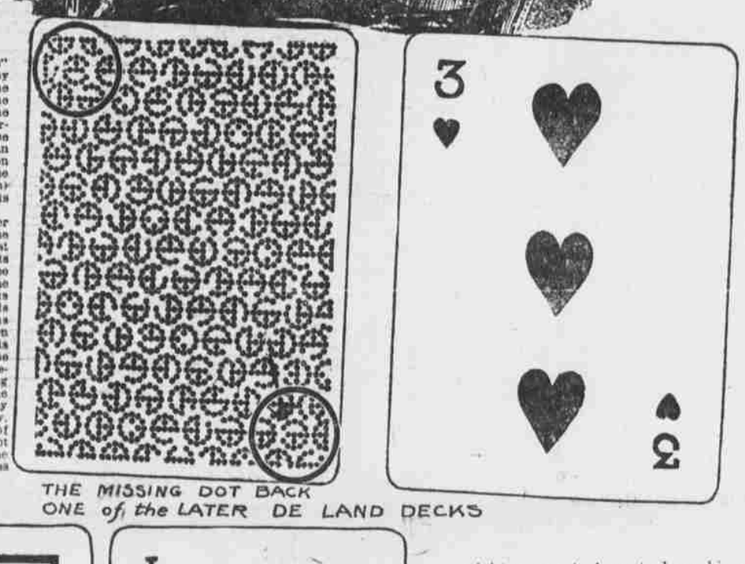
So he seeks new fields to conquer.

It is but a step from the "social" club in sweater and cap to the room of a fashionable hotel with a dinner jacket for a front, a bank roll for an opening wedge and an increasing number of new friends and playmates made through judicious spending.

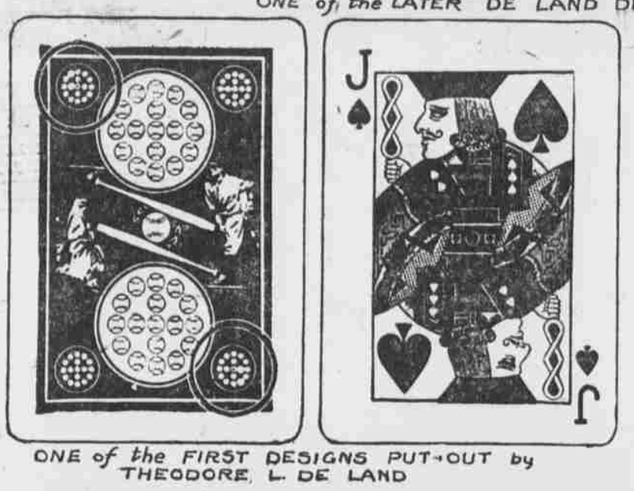
Uncle Sam might well consider himself fortunate that in the games "enjoyed" by his young sons the cheats are in the minority. But America is inquisitive and quick to learn.

The key to the "readers" shown here and copyrighted by Theodore L. De Land is the clock dial. For example, in the jack of spades the value of the card is shown in the dotted circle. It will be noticed that one of the dots is a little larger than the rest. Taking the numbers on the clock from the hour one (ace) to the hour twelve (queen) it is easy to see that this card is a jack (eleven).

Now to tell the suit, remember that the key is the compass, the north being diamonds, the east (right) clubs, the south hearts and the west spades. So if one of the four compass dots in the centre space of the circle is larger than the others it tells the suit. Therefore this card is the jack of spades (west). When none of the dots in the circle is enlarged the card is a king. The same system holds in other designs, the compass points being the openings on the side of the circle and the card pointed by the petal missing from the daisy. The same is true of the trey of hearts, only in this case the dot missing from the circle is the value of the card and compass design is in the centre.




THE MISSING DOT BACK ONE of the LATER DE LAND DECKS




ONE of the FIRST DESIGNS PUT-OUT by THEODORE L. DE LAND

# Beauty of the American Dipper

A MAN was seated beside a swift mountain stream in the Far West eating his luncheon. A bird note, like the tinkle of a silver bell, struck his ear. He was always interested in woodland music, so he paused with a sandwich half way to his mouth, listened and watched for the songster. The note was one that he had never heard before. In a few moments a slate gray, dumpy bird about the size of a robin, with a short, curved beak and an upright, wren like tail, alighted on a boulder in the stream not far from where he sat. The bird was the American dipper or water ouzel.

Now the man had read of the exquisite song of this bird, but had never before heard it. The little fellow threw up his head, poured forth his liquid clear, tinkling note, the very spirit of the wild. He was presently joined by his mate, and the two sat upon the rock and watched the man. They were quite tame, and they came to pick up the crumbs tossed to them. A few rods below the stream ran about the foot of a basalt cliff. The female dashed across the stream, alighted on a shelf of rock, and entered a tuft of moss that hung just above the water, so near that the spray dashed over it. In a short time she reappeared, apparently satisfied that the man had not molested her domicile, and joined her mate. By looking closely he could see a round opening among the moss.

He waded across the stream on a voyage of discovery. The tuft of moss was a nest so cunningly devised and so adroitly hidden that it was well nigh invisible. Four milk white eggs reposed on a soft, damp bed. The pair made much ado about the man's intrusion, but he left them in peace.

The American dipper is one of the most interesting and peculiar of all our native birds. The bird is shy and retiring. It frequents the swift mountain streams of the Rocky Mountain region and never approaches human habitations. Only the angler who penetrates the unsettled mountain regions is familiar with these birds, and he knows of them only as he hears their noisy clatter as they flit from rock to rock.

Although the dipper has no web feet it is an expert swimmer, or rather flier, beneath the water, for it seems to make use of its wings to move about in that element. No matter how swift the current, the little chap tumbles in, pell-mell, and scrambles about on the bottom in search of food. One day this man surprised a half grown dipper sitting on a rock in midstream where the water poured down in a torrent. He promptly plunged in and the man lost sight of him. He watched downstream, expecting to see the bird come to the surface tossed about like a chip; but he did nothing of the sort.

After several minutes the man occupied the rock he had vacated and prepared to cast his flies into the foot of a considerable fall. Sitting demurely on a narrow shelf of rock was his bird. How he managed to make his way there against the rushing water was a mystery. He seemed so much at home in the water that the man decided to try an experiment. He chased the bird from his perch and into the water he went. In a few seconds the little creature was seen beneath the fall, making his way across the stream. He came out on the opposite side and scolded the man for his impertinence.

It is quite common to see these birds in winter, when the streams are partially frozen, feeding beneath the ice. They creep along the bottom, picking up insects, and are plainly visible through the clear ice and water.

In scientific classification the dipper occupies a position midway between the wrens and the thrushes, and his name comes from his peculiar habit of bowing or dipping gracefully when he meets you. He has another most amusing habit—that of winking in a roguish manner.