



SAMUEL SCOVILLE, JR.

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Samuel Scoville Jr., attorney, nature student, public speaker and writer died December 5, 1950 at the age of seventy-eight. He had enjoyed fifty-one of these years with Mrs. Scoville, the former Katherine Trumbull, to whom he frequently referred in his column in the Evening Bulletin as his "missus". One of his surviving children, Rev. Gurdon T. Scoville, was a former member of our club.

What a loss we have suffered in the death of Samuel Scoville Jr.! He joined in 1907 and was the most colorful long-time member of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club. I became acquainted with him shortly after I joined the club in 1911, and many exciting field trips were taken in his company. Closely associated with him were Dr. Witmer Stone, George Stuart III, and J. Fletcher Street, all out of the picture now.

Nothing brought out Sam's love of the out-of-doors like a field trip. Here he was preeminent, and when he was along there was plenty of excitement. These trips, as a rule, were composed of five congenial cronies and were organized by Fletcher Street, with the object of collecting eggs for George Stuart.

The plan of the trip was something like this:—Stone, ornithologist, keen observer, and note taker; Street, official photographer and enthusiasm promoter; Scoville, reporter and recorder of all the highlights of the trip. These reports he later got together in an article or series of articles and sold to publishers or perhaps held for book material. He was the only one who profited financially from the trips, the others had their reward in the fun and good fellowship involved.

Stuart directed, planned and urged on to more fruitful fields with indefatigable energy and to the point of exhaustion of the entire crew. His prodding continued until the object was attained and the eggs "stolen," as Dick Miller would say. I was only a galley slave in these affairs. I had somehow attained a reputation as a finder of nests. Stuart worked on this and also on me, and I worked for George and for fun.

Sam Scoville was an enthusiastic field worker and inspired all of his associates. He worked with vigor, sparing himself not at all. His enthusiasm was paramount in any endeavor. In many ways he resembled the renowned Theodore Roosevelt. Poor eyesight demanded the same thick glasses. He was about the same height, thick set, had facial resemblance, and was full of youthful vigor, just as the former president was. He was in fact sometimes mistaken for Roosevelt.

What a day we had one time at Newton, New Jersey, way back in the early twenties. We had tramped one of those tussock-dotted marshes that still existed in those days. This was exhausting work. We were all resting in a near-by field at lunch time when Stuart proposed that we search for a Brown Creeper's nest which was reported to be in a neighboring swamp. He straightway secured the services of a local character with an old Ford and we hied away to the swamp. Our search proved futile, as we could find no Brown Creeper. Suddenly Sam Scoville let out a whoop, "Pileated Woodpecker, a nest, by George, and occupied too!"

The nest was about forty feet up in a dead elm tree. "George, give me your irons. I'm going up," cried Sam. "You're crazy," said George. He always carried "hooks" (climbing irons) but never used them himself; someone else always did the climbing. "Give me the irons," Sam repeated in excitement. Laboriously he made his way up the trunk, up, up, slow, slower, he stopped. "He's slipping," shouted George. Down he came, slam! He lay back on the leaves panting like a tired dog. He recovered, but for a time we had our doubts. Then our guide volunteered, "I can climb her." "Why, you're a married man, aren't you?" asked George. "Sure, married with four kids." "You should not do it, think of your family." "Family h-l, I can climb her," and climb her he did. He stuck his arm into the hole up to the arm pit. "No bottom," he yelled. The old woodpecker's eggs were safe. Why is it, I have often asked myself, that married men with families will risk their lives, while bachelors (George was single at that time) will say, "no, no, nothing doing"? The above is only one of many bird adventures which I took part in with Samuel Scoville, Jr. All are fond memories now.

As secretary of the club at the time, I usually relied on Stone or Scoville to pinch-hit with a subject in case I could find no one to speak, which was quite often. On one occasion no one could be cornered. I asked Stone, then Scoville, but both refused. "Wait a minute," I said, "if you don't, I'll have to." "What! You speak? By George, no! I'll speak," said Scoville.

As a speaker Mr. Scoville was preeminent; he would have nothing to do with such props as slides or movies. He depended upon his own thoughts and humor, and keenly enjoyed the hearty reaction of his listeners. In his column, "A Philadelphia Lawyer," in the Evening Bulletin he answered legal questions with a human touch mixed with philosophy and humor. In the Sunday issue he dealt not with law but with ornithology, zoology and botany, giving vivid and colorful accounts of his rambles in the woods and fields.

Mr. Scoville was a staunch Republican all of his life and had no use for the "new deal, fair deal or double deal", but for the "square deal" of Theodore Roosevelt, yes. Socialism he thought was not a division of wealth but in the long run a division of poverty.

Samuel Scoville Jr. will be greatly missed by his associates, but as Fletcher Street said at the passing of Dr. Stone, "If he could speak to you today he would say not to mourn but continue as before just as if he were among you."

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THE COVER

The splendid drawing of the Duck Hawk on this issue was made and presented for our use by Conrad Roland, of Kempton, Berks County, Pa.