

# EUROPEAN STARLING MAKES "DISH FIT FOR A KING."

Thousands of European starlings, a scourge to farmers of the State of Delaware in recent years, are rapidly finding themselves the chief ingredients of a new kind of pot-pie, which unhappily for their existence, has been hailed a most succulent dish.

So serious had the bird's depredations become in the last year and to such an extent had its numbers increased that farmers had begun to resign themselves to the loss of a certain amount of their crops each year as toll to the feathery robbers.

But the starling, unlike the crow, is a likeable thief. He is friendly and makes his roost in barns and deserted homes. To this fact and the thriftiness of some unknown Delaware housewife he owes his downfall. Within the last month it was discovered that the starling made a "dish fit for a king" and a dish that could be cooked for the mere killing.

Hunting parties were organized and each night would find groups of men trooping to one of the roosting places where the family larder could be stocked with a week's supply only for the trouble of clubbing the bird to death.

One of the record kills of the season was made in the barn of Edward Cooper, five miles south of Milford, Del. Armed with flashlights, shot clubs and a huge fishing net the hunting party made their way to the barn shortly before midnight.

The net was stretched around the walls to cover chinks and holes through which the birds might gain exit and at a given signal the hunters turned their flashlights on the ceilings and rafters. The birds were in the net fluttering helplessly while the men went after them with their clubs. There was a brief flurry of excitement, feathers flew, and the hunters found themselves the victor over a flock of more than 800 starlings, the makings of countless pot-pies.

"They're the finest eating a man could want to touch," one said. "You take the fine dark meat of the bird, cover the bottom of your pan with a heavy layer and on top of that place some potatoes. Over them you put some more dark meat and after adding a dash of salt and after flavoring that your taste desires, cover all with a top crust well shortened so that it comes out of the oven crisp and brown. The rest I can only leave to your imagination and the power of your cook."

The starling itself is long-beaked and short tailed. Its feathers have a brownish gloss and in the sunlight give off metallic purple and green reflections. Each of its feathers is

tipped with buff. The bird was first introduced into this country in New York in 1890. Since that time it has multiplied until now it is fairly common to all the eastern States.

A leading authority as an ornithologist, in referring to the wonderful fecundity of the starlings, as was so clearly exemplified by thousands of these birds as they lodged upon the cornices and columns of the State Capitol during the evenings and the nights, proved that their importation only a few years ago was another evidence as to how the process of introduction goes pyramiding with no one able to foretell the eventual results. A reporter who passed along the State highway, near Jonestown, Lebanon county, sometime ago, saw a flock of starlings that was estimated to number at least 5,000 and forming a vertical shield against the sun when flying en masse. These birds attracted much attention.

The European starling, introduced into Australia, New Zealand and Africa, is said to have changed its habits and is accused of damaging grapes and other crops. Since its introduction it also spread over a territory east of the Mississippi river, and as far north as Canada and British Columbia.

There is a strong possibility that eventually it may really become a menace to the production of some of our home-grown food products of the farm. Cereals, injurious insects, wild fruits and weed seeds form their dietary, according to the many stomachs examined. The latest reports indicate that some live bird shooting matches are being held in Pennsylvania, where starlings were substituted for the common varieties of barn yard pigeons, with fairly satisfactory results for the sporting fraternity.—Lititz Record.

## Science and Invention.

California leads every State in hydro-electric developments. Petrified trees in Texas are now claimed to be peculiar rock formations.

Airplanes are to be used for sowing rice in the great marshes of Manitoba.

The first complete sewing machine was patented by Elias Howe, Jr., in 1846.

A camera has been specially designed for making slow-motion pictures of automobile engines.

To drive full speed, the Nelson, Britain's newest warship, requires sixteen tons of fuel oil per hour.

The resistance of the air opposed to progress of an airplane increases as the square of the speed.

Asphalt is one of the oldest minerals known, and one which has played a most important part in the progress of civilization.

The labor of driving an automobile is lessened by a new steering mechanism that is operated chiefly by power from a car's motor.

## ISLAND OF BLUE FOXES.

In these days of congested population, rapid transit, telegraph and radio connections, it is hard to imagine people living in solitude like that of Robinson Crusoe. Yet this hero, so much admired by youthful readers of an earlier decade, was no farther from neighbors than are the dwellers of today on a certain island in the North Pacific.

Middleton Island lies 160 miles off the southern coast of Alaska, almost due south of Cordova, a town of 1,000 inhabitants. From no point in its area of a little less than eight square miles is there anything to be seen except limitless sea and sky.

The Indian name for the island, Ashaka or Achatsoo (which sounds very much like a sneeze) means "The Harborless." It is a descriptive title, for in all the shore line there is no safe anchorage for boats of any sort.

Steamers having business at Middleton must stay well outside of the dead line of crashing surf which surrounds it nearly every day of the year, and take the hazard of sending in a small boat. Rarely can the occupants of such a boat reach the shore without a thorough drenching, if nothing worse happens to them. More than once a schooner, after a day or more of standing by, has been obliged to wigwag a disappointed farewell and depart without having accomplished her errand.

Callers at the island are few and far between, however, as it is off the course of boats bound for Seward, Nome and the Arctic. Once in a blue moon, one of the fishing boats which ply along the Alaskan coast turns off the beaten path to pay the island a friendly visit, and is lucky if its dory is able to make a landing. No postman makes an untiring daily call upon the islanders, no telephone bell tinkles its welcome summons to communication with the outer world. Not even a trail of smoke or a sail on the horizon is sighted for two, three, or even six months at a time; yet in this utter isolation two voluntary exiles live in comfort and contentment for eleven months of the year.

Since 1890 Middleton has been leased by the government to various private concerns as a breeding farm for blue foxes, and in consequence there has been a succession of Crusoes in charge of the place. The present one is by birth a Bostonian, who emigrated to the Yukon during the Klondike rush and thence crossed to Uncle Sam's territory on the trail of another "big strike."

Like many another in those hectic days, he made and lost fortunes, traveled and prospected over many hundreds of miles of that vast country, and acquired what your true Alaskan always possesses—the ability to turn his hand to any occupation which comes along and to make it go.

Unlike Defoe's famous hero, this modern Crusoe brought an excellent partner to share his solitude. Mrs. Crusoe was a Boston school teacher until her exodus to the far northwest ten years ago. Some years ago these two sold a prosperous restaurant business in Cordova, Alaska, and left that thriving little town to begin their experience in fox farming on Middleton, out in the ocean.

The breeding of blue foxes in captivity is not an easy undertaking owing to the extreme shyness of the fox family. They do not readily grow accustomed to man, but generally have the attitude of wild animals on the defensive. A mother fox, when alarmed, has been known to kill her offspring on the instant, and the constant nervousness of the animals even affects the quality of the fur.

On the island the foxes are unaware of being prisoners, as they roam freely; so they rear their young in the natural way, double their number annually, and produce skins of great beauty.

The blue fox has a long-haired fur of a soft gray tone at the ends of the hairs, shading to a dull blue close to the pelt. An average price in the London market is \$175, while exceptionally fine skins may bring \$375.

The chief duty of the fox farmer is to provide and daily distribute fresh food for his charges, at stations scattered about the island, especially during the winter months. Besides a small proportion of vegetables, rations consist of rabbits and the flesh of the hair seal when it can be obtained. This requires expert marksmanship, as the seal must be shot through the head in order to float ashore; otherwise it sinks and is lost.

In summer the foxes will leave the food in the feeding boxes and go foraging for themselves, running along the beach in search of fish eggs and small fish washed up in the kelp or climbing the cliffs to rob the sea-pigeons' nests of eggs and squabs. The animals are seen at close range only in December, when they are lured into box traps.

Climatic conditions on Middleton are agreeable on the whole, except for the strong and almost constant winds which sweep it. The lowest temperature recorded is 20 degrees below zero, the highest 110. There is an annual rainfall of about 96 inches and from 2 to 4 inches of snow in winter. The succession of seasons is not unlike that of New England, although the summer is much longer. Spring on Middleton begins with the reappearance of plant life about the middle of February. From this time on, the sun shines warmer and longer each day until the summer solstice. Between May 1 and August 15 there are from 15 to 20 hours of sunlight daily, and during June and July no darkness at all. But the islanders pay for this luxury in the long nights of winter, when they get hardly more than a glimpse of old Sol during the entire month of December.

One of the natural beauties of the islands is a chain of lakes, clear as crystal and large enough to afford the pleasures of boating. Scattered along the shores of the lakes are the only trees which the place possesses—12 small spruces, battered and bruised by the winds, but raising to give up the fight. Grass of 12 varieties grows everywhere, sometimes growing six or eight feet high.

There are no enemies of plant life on the island. Picture the joys of horticulture without aphids, cutworms or potato bugs. The mosquito, that terrible pest of the Alaskan mainland, is also absent. Evidently it was not on Middleton island that the Indians used to tie a man naked in the woods in mosquito time as a form of capital punishment.

However, for three weeks in August life is made miserable by the tiny gnat called by the Indians "No-see-ums," which will go through any netting yet devised by man, and therefore cannot be kept out of the house entirely.

During the last week of June great quantities of wild strawberries ripen all over the island, and for a month the residents revel in them. Then, in August, the salmonberry bushes are heavily laden with ripe berries, almost any one of which would fill an after-dinner coffee cup.

Delectable strawberry preserves and salmonberry jelly are two of the luxuries which Mrs. Crusoe provides for the winter menu. The staples in large quantities are brought in from Cordova yearly.

When the islanders need eggs they go to the great chalk cliffs at the north end of the island, where the sea pigeons nest. Stretched flat on the cliff top, with a hook-and-bag contraption, they fish up the eggs from the ledges below. They are a trifle smaller than hens' eggs and of excellent flavor.

When the game season opens, on September 15, the lakes are filled with game birds, feeding and resting on their way down from their summer in Arctic regions. Unfortunately, the birds all leave before the weather is cold enough to freeze the meat for winter use.

Hungry for fresh meat, the islanders sampled the flesh of a young hair seal just killed and found they had hit upon a real treat. The meat which resembles venison in appearance, was juicy and delicious when roasted, and the liver more delicate than calves' liver.

Everyday life on Middleton island is full of potential dangers; a furious winter storm, a fall from the cliffs, a shooting accident—any of these might bring suffering and sorrow. The most serious situations which have arisen have been shortages of food and ammunition.

Once each year in January, the islanders board a small schooner for Cordova for a month's stay. The most important business there, after seeing the furs off for London, is the buying of equipment for the next year—food, clothing, tools, ammunition, reading matter, and a hundred and one sundries, all essential.

## Weather Expert Explains Meaning of Sky's Colors.

All sky colors, from deepest blue of the fairest day, through the gray to bluish gray and almost black of the cloudy or stormy sky, to the greenish, yellowish and reddish shades we often see, are due to the changes imparted to the sunlight by the differing conditions of the atmosphere through which light passes, explains a weather prophet in the Farm Journal.

When we stop to think that the ordinary yellowish sun's rays, in passing through raindrops, may be broken up into the beautiful hues of the rainbow, we can more readily understand how changes in the dustiness, temperature, moisture—including invisible vapor and cloudiness—windiness, etc., in the atmosphere, as well as the angle at which the light passes through it, may all have their effects in obscuring, reflecting, scattering or breaking up light rays.

The red sky at sunset indicates that there is very little moisture in the atmosphere. If there are clouds at that time and they are red, they usually disappear after sunset, so there are no probabilities in either case of early rain. If there is much moisture during the cooling of evening, some of it is condensed at higher layers, thus producing a grayish sky, which indicates rain.

In the morning, when the atmosphere has not been under the influence of sunlight during the day, the opposite occurs. The gray morning indicates a dry atmosphere above, even though the surface air layer is dewy, and a fair day is indicated.

## Political 'Gas' of 1876.

Few of those who will attend the forthcoming conventions of the major political parties of the country at Kansas City and Houston will recall the great gathering of political leaders at Madison, Wisconsin, in 1876, when Hayes and Wheeler were the standard bearers of the Republican party.

A local newspaper under date of September 4, 1876, tells the story. "The names of the Republican candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States—Hayes and Wheeler—composed of small gas jets, have been placed over the entrance to party headquarters. This is a magnificent illumination and one of the greatest ever seen in Madison."

This is but an incident in the romantic history of the gas industry, which now has reached the point where preliminary estimates of the sale of manufactured gas alone for 1927 indicate an increase of 20,000,000 cubic feet over the record-breaking total registered in 1926.

## How St. Patrick Got His Reputation.

Most people thing of St. Patrick as Irish. Of course, he was not. The chief thing that legend attributes to him was the honor of driving all the snakes out of Ireland. History does not record the event. I think that the story must have arisen from the fact that Patrick took refuge after his escape from captivity in the island cloister of Lerrinus. In the beginning, Lerrinus had been infested by snakes, so that no man could live there. Honoratus, a monk, took possession of it, drove out the snakes and reclaimed it for cultivation. Hence the confusion. I imagine the snakes were all gone by the time Patrick reached there.

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## About Poison Gas.

Even though the war has been over for several years, statistics show that 682 persons died by poison gas in the United States last year.

While the general health of the country appears to be improving, the number of deaths caused by accidents is increasing, particularly the mortality traced to accidental absorption of poisonous gases, due largely to motorists starting their engines in garages with doors closed.

Motorists are being warned continually to be careful when working with their cars in garages, to be sure to have plenty of ventilation, as the effects of carbon monoxide gas strikes death without warning.

An interesting summary as to the effects of this gas is contained in a summary for the year, and is as follows:

"One of the greatest dangers to health and life is carbon monoxide gas, which kills before you notice it. A small quantity breathed into the lungs may cause immediate death.

"Everyone should understand what this gas is, and how it works, in order that definite precaution may be taken against it.

"All gasoline engines, when running, generate carbon monoxide gas; burning gas stoves and heaters do also, if combustion is incomplete.

"Actual tests have proved that the exhaust fumes from a running motor will render deadly the air of a small closed garage within three minutes.

"A person may be really immersed in the gas and never suspect it until he begins to grow dizzy or becomes paralyzed. The next stage is unconsciousness; the next death.

"When death does not come, the effects may be depression, lowered vitality, and lessened resistance to disease. The feeling of tightness across the forehead, headache, or the tired feeling after an automobile ride may not be due to eyestrain, but to a leaky engine exhaust releasing carbon monoxide."

## "Lindbergh Light" Will Be Visible to Aviators at 250 Miles.

The "Lindbergh Light" which is to be erected on one of Chicago's skyscrapers, will be visible to flyers 250 miles away.

The light will be projected through a lens more than five feet in diameter, which is a few inches less than the diameter of the largest flawless optical lens ever made in this country, cast recently in a gas-fired furnace by the Federal Bureau of Standards.

A light beam of several billion candlepower passing through the 63-inch lens will rival the intensity of the sun at high noon, it is claimed. The great beacon—Chicago's tribute to America's premier long distance flyer—will be mounted on the roof of one of the city's tallest office buildings, 610 feet above the level of the street.

—The bat hanging upside down laughs at the topsy-turvy world.—Japanese Proverb.

## Wild Game Comes Through Winter in Fine Condition.

Wild game, including birds and large and small animals, is weathering the winter season in better shape than for many years and gives promise of coming through to spring with less loss from starvation and freezing than in any year since the game commission intensified its work of propagation and protection, according to reports from refuge keepers and sportsmen who have been in the forests recently.

It will be remembered that last fall there was widespread fear that thousands of birds and game animals in this region would die of starvation during the winter season. This was caused by the fact that vegetation was poor last year. There were no nuts, few blossoms and apparently little natural food in sight. There was widespread agitation urging artificial feeding and many sportsmen toted bags of grain into the woods and deposited it for the convenience of the animals. The signs held good through the deer season and increased the fears of heavy destruction in spite of the fact that deer appeared to be fatter and sleeker than for many years.

However, it now becomes apparent that Mother Nature has looked after her own by providing such a mild winter season that practically all the game has been enabled to forage sufficiently to maintain its livelihood without difficulty.

## Chicago Skyscrapers Bid for Aero Beacon.

Skyscrapers in the downtown district of Chicago are bidding for the honor of erecting on their tops the tower for "Lindbergh Light," the proposed world's largest aircraft beacon, which will be visible to aviators 250 miles away it is announced by Clyde I. Backus, secretary of the Chicago Trade Advancement Association, which is working with the Chicago Aero Commission for the furtherance of the project.

The light is to be donated by Elmer G. Sperry, president of the Sperry Gyroscope company, of Brooklyn, N. Y. It was found it would be expensive to build the tower, furnish electricity and maintain the plant, and this held up plans for its development until it was suggested that some of the loop's tall buildings would find it valuable for advertising purposes.

Some half a dozen buildings have placed bids and one will be chosen at next week's meeting of the Aero mission, Mr. Backus said.

It is expected the beacon will be in operation next summer.

—Papa was deep in a book, when his wife called, "Dan, baby has swallowed the ink. Whatever shall I do?" "Write with a pencil," was the reply.—Patton's Monthly.

On a wrecked automobile by the roadside some one had attached a placard reading: "I do not choose to run in 1928."

## Now Ready at Faubles

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