

Some Foes of Farmers.

HOW THEY ARE FOUGHT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

General Rusk—the doughty Wisconsin Governor who is now Secretary of the new Department of Agriculture—is not a member of the Cabinet for the fun of it. On entering upon his duties he took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves as he used to do, and in fact still does, in laying time, and now, in the second year of his term, he has got his big team well in hand, knows all of its tricks, and is making them buckle to the best they know.

I have spoken of it as a big team, but it will be bigger. General Rusk has determined that his Department shall be, in size and effectiveness, what it really is in importance, and the appropriation committee seems inclined to let him have his way. With larger means at his disposal he will organize new bureaus and will largely to his skilled force of experts and he is ready to consider and solve all problems which the farmers of the United States have to encounter.

One of the most interesting as well as useful divisions of the Department is that of ornithology and mammalogy, presided over by Dr. C. Hart Merriam. The object of it, as farmers are fast discovering, the study of the economic relations of birds and animals to agriculture, what birds are beneficial to the farmer and what are his enemies, how shall the first be protected and the last destroyed. So, too, regarding animals—such as the skunk, the woodchuck, prairie dogs, and gophers. All the farmer wishes to know is how to protect his crops from all sorts of pests and vermin, whether the bird or the earth. Already some of the Western States have paid out not less than \$200,000 in bounties for the extermination of gophers. A great deal of money is now being spent toward the extermination of the English sparrow, against which a ponderous counterblast or bulletin has been issued by Dr. Merriam and his assistants, it having been decided that Passer domesticus is a curse indeed, and must go.

The good effect of this big bulletin against the sparrow and its kindred and the war of restriction and extermination has begun. Doubtless the gopher bulletins will accomplish the same results when they are issued. The section of territory inhabited by the three species of gophers is being carefully mapped by Dr. Merriam, and will form a valuable and interesting contribution to the study of biology.

An elaborate work on hawks and owls is in course of preparation, which will be beautifully illustrated, and at the same time will point out to the farmer those birds which are wholly beneficial and harmless; those who do about as much good as harm, and those which are noxious or positively harmful. Out of the 73 different birds of which there will be treated it is gratifying to know that but a few of the noxious species are common in the United States.

The crow is to have a volume dedicated to his habits and goings on, and in the time the crow blackbird, or parula bird, will be treated in the same way. When this work is done, all the farmer will have to do is to get copies of the various bird bulletins, read them, and then follow their instructions. He can thereafter shoot noxious birds at sight with an enlightened understanding, and among those which are beneficial. Among these are the rose breasted grosbeak or yellow billed cuckoo, which have developed an appetite for Colorado potato beetles and cutworms. Unfortunately these useful and potato-bug-eating birds are not very numerous, but the best can be made of what we have.

Many curious and important facts about birds are discovered from an examination of the contents of their stomachs, and to that end the division has a large and interesting collection of bird stomachs from all parts of the country. The collection now numbers not far from 12,000 stomachs, each put up in a separate vial with alcohol, and labeled. Nearly 1,000 stomachs were added the past year. The collection contains the stomachs of such birds as sparrows of all kinds, warblers, blackbirds, meadow larks, bobolinks, crows, owls, hawks, swallows, wrens, bluebirds, robins, kingfishers, woodpeckers, and many other birds, all of which, in due time, will be studied by the microscopist, the botanist, the zoologist, the ornithologist, etc., and the results recorded for the benefit of the farmer. An examination of the food and habits of the marsh hawk, for instance, proves that it is a very beneficial bird, doing far more good than harm, and that it should be protected by law. The common screech owl is proved, by the same means, to be a good friend of the farmer's. It eats a host of mice and insects, and has recently taken to supping off English sparrows. This little owl should be encouraged, and boys should be taught to let its nests alone.

Dr. Merriam finds that he needs more help to carry on the great work in which he is engaged. Letters pour in upon him at the rate of 135 a day; thousands of circulars have to be sent out, and many birds and mammals are sent to the office for identification. If permitted, Dr. Merriam proposes to undertake a systematic biological survey in which he will map out the natural life areas of the country, so that the farmer can tell by consulting the map and bulletin, which sections of the land are fitted by nature for the growth of certain crops, and the export of certain kinds of stock. It is a great work, and will consume much time.

WOMEN VOTING IN KANSAS. In spite of the unflinching enthusiasm among strong minded women for the cause of female suffrage it is plain to every observer that woman has no natural tendency towards politics. If she ever becomes a practical politician, an energetic voter, a ballot-box stuffer, or the inventor of any ingenious voting system like the Dudley blocks of five, it will not be because she possesses any intuitive aptitude for such things, but because a taste for them has been exclusively cultivated. For many years she has been told by the professional advocates of woman suffrage that she ought to vote, that she was denied a blessed privilege on being excluded from the polls; but addresses from the platform, female suffrage conventions and declamations from the stump have failed to convince her of her political wrongs alleged, and, in the few cases where it has been granted, women have shown no special eagerness to avail themselves of the voting privilege.

The elections in Kansas first brought clear disappointment to the friends of female suffrage. It was the most extensive opportunity for women's voting that the country has ever provided. It was an election of county judges and



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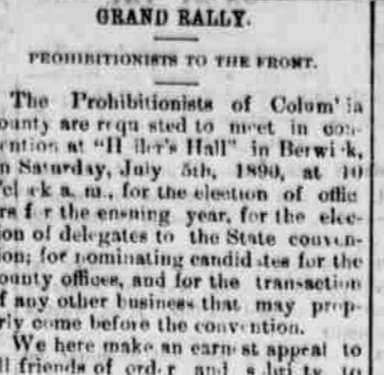
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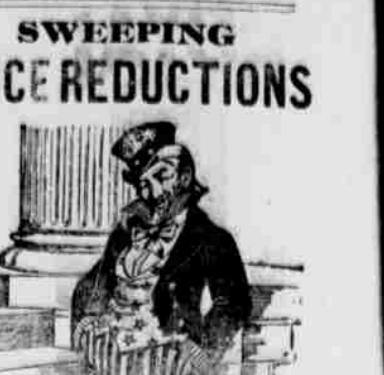
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