

# The Work of the President's Cabinet

## INTERIOR DEPARTMENT

Shortly after Cato Sells became commissioner of Indian affairs his attention was forcibly directed to the very unsatisfactory condition of probate matters in the forty counties comprising eastern Oklahoma.

The act of May 27, 1909, conferred upon the local courts of Oklahoma probate jurisdiction in all matters pertaining to the settlement of estates of deceased Indians and the management of the property of their minor children, in manner similar to the white population. In all other parts of the Indian country the estates of restricted Indians are handled entirely by the federal government.

Because of the suddenness with which the county courts were confronted with this problem and the immensity of the task, there being 43,959 cases on their dockets in November, 1913, or an average of from 800 to 1,000 cases in each of the several counties, Muskogee county having more than 6,000, a deplorable condition rapidly developed. Gross frauds were being perpetrated, participated in by unscrupulous land buyers, lawyers, guardians and others; in some counties even local officers some of whom held judicial positions were implicated, with the result that the lands of minor children were generally sold without proper justification and for insufficient consideration and the funds frequently squandered by those whose ulterior purpose brought about the sale. Insolvent bondsmen were commonly named and accountings to the courts seldom filed. Misappropriation of funds was generally discovered when it was apparent that no recourse was obtainable because of the insolvency of the guardian and his bondsmen or when the beneficiary had filed beyond the reach of civil or criminal process. Altogether the estates of Indian minor children had been so ravished as to insure their impoverishment and the demand for speedy and courageous action was imminent.

This situation coming to the knowledge of Commissioner Sells resulted in his promptly calling a conference in Washington of the tribal attorneys, principal chiefs and governors of the five civilized tribes in November, 1913, for the discussion of tentative plans looking toward aggressive action for the accomplishment of substantial betterments. After working out a systematic plan of action which was approved by Secretary Lane a number of capable and dependable probate attorneys were appointed to cooperate with and assist the county judges in the discharge of their duties in connection with the probating of Indian minors' estates.

Shortly thereafter Commissioner Sells visited Oklahoma where he spent considerable time in conference with the county judges, tribal and probate attorneys and other Oklahoma citizens who were invited to participate with the view of adopting a uniform set of rules of probate procedure. These conferences were attended by practically all the judges in the counties located in the territory of the five civilized tribes and after earnest discussion and the development of a remarkable spirit of co-operation in which the local authorities and citizens handsomely responded to the suggestions of the commissioner, a set of rules quite the equal of the probate statutes of any state in the union were unanimously adopted, and having first received the approval of Judge Williams, president of the State County Judges' association, they were promulgated. At each of these conferences resolutions were adopted announcing a spirit of earnest helpfulness and altogether as the result of this coming together of the representatives of the government and the local authorities there was developed a condition of common sympathy and aggressive action theretofore unknown, and making certain the dawning of a new day in the administration of the property interests of the Indian children of Oklahoma. Assurance of this apparent condition was further justified because of the patriotic expressions from leading citizens in all the walks of life including Governor Cruce who in a published pronouncement gave unqualified approval of the movement.

During the short time since this organized effort the certainty of its success has been demonstrated in that soon thereafter grand juries returned indictments against some of those who were guilty of misappropriation with the result that several defendants have been convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary, and

everywhere throughout this entire Indian country the state and federal authorities are doing team work and rapidly bringing about such an improved condition as to insure the future protection of Indian children's property to the everlasting credit of the state of Oklahoma and to every person who has participated in its accomplishment. While the first purpose of the interior department and the county judges is to prevent further frauds and to save the estates for the use and benefit of the minors and when possible recover property which would otherwise have been lost to them, in flagrant cases it will be the duty of the officials to criminally prosecute offenders, and it may be depended upon that wherever justified it will be done without fear or favor.

The successful reform of this deplorable probate condition in Oklahoma is now practically certain and will be one of the notable accomplishments of the Wilson administration.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### TO PROTECT GAME IN ALASKA

The new regulations of the department, which went into effect April 1st, prohibit the shooting of moose in southeastern Alaska and of mountain sheep in the eastern part of the Kenai peninsula until April 1, 1916.

Hitherto Alaskan game has been protected only by a closed season and the system of fees for shooting and shipping licenses. The excellence of the big game shooting has, however, been attracting wealthy sportsmen of all countries in greater and greater numbers each year. The Alaskan bear is the largest known variety and the Alaskan moose-head is regarded as the finest trophy of the kind in the world, the horns sometimes measuring six feet across. In addition there are splendid specimens of caribou to be had and the mountain sheep when in good condition, are distinguished from all the varieties found elsewhere by the peculiarly pure white of their fleece.

The districts affected by the new regulations are among the most readily accessible to sportsmen.

### RAILWAYS FINED

Three cases of the department of agriculture against the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway Co., for violation of the twenty-eight-hour law have recently been terminated in Kansas. The penalty in each case was \$100 and costs which were respectively \$16.60, \$16.50 and \$15.25. The Union Pacific Railway Co. was fined \$100 and costs of \$53.31 for violating the same law. The law in question prohibits the confinement of live stock in cars for more than twenty-eight hours without unloading for feed, water and rest (when a special request is signed by the shipper the time may be extended to thirty-six hours).

A case against Henry E. Brown for violation of the live-stock quarantine law was terminated on March 23 in the Eastern district of Pennsylvania. The defendant was fined \$100.

### WARNING REGARDING DAMAGED COTTON-SEED

During the month the department issued a warning to the farmers of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas stating that the introduction of any new varieties of cotton, producing fiber of less than seven-eighths of an inch in average length will be likely to seriously damage the reputation of their local markets, and may result in a few years in basing the price on this inferior cotton. These same districts are now receiving a slight premium over the regular quotations for short staple. The department will particularly regret to see the result of the campaign which has been waged in Oklahoma in behalf of pure Triumph cotton jeopardized by the promiscuous introduction of a cotton of greatly inferior staple. Such a policy must result in very serious losses to all the growers in the communities where the poorer types become common.

Repeated complaints are received from English spinners of the number of "mixy" bales of American cotton. This condition arises largely through the introduction of short cotton into staple communities or of long staple into short cotton territory.

Any serious mixing in the field of varieties which have fiber of different lengths results in

serious losses in waste whenever the cotton is spun upon machinery adjusted for the longer varieties. Spinners who are using Triumph will be quick to discover any serious admixture of shorter and inferior cotton, and growers of Triumph cotton will suffer if such varieties become popular in their territory.

### A CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE ROOSTER

The poultry specialists of the department have started a campaign to eliminate the rooster among poultry flocks during the seasons between May 1st and December 1st. In this connection Saturday, May 16th, has been set aside as rooster day in Kentucky and Tennessee, when every poultry dealer in these states has agreed to pay the same prices for roosters as they do for hens and pullets. There is an enormous loss in eggs as the result of the fertile egg, especially during the summer and fall months, and it is for this reason the department of agriculture recommends that the rooster be kept away from the hens during these seasons. It is estimated that one-third of the tremendous annual loss of eggs is due to the fertile egg.

It is not necessary for a rooster to be among hens in order that their laying qualities may not be curtailed. The rooster, it is advised, should be allowed with the hens only during the breeding season, and eggs that are intended for hatching purposes should be fertile, as the infertile ones will not hatch.

Fertile eggs spoil very quickly when subjected to the ordinary methods of handling on the farm, and when marketed during the hot summer months under adverse conditions. Infertile eggs will keep in good condition in temperatures which will cause fertile eggs to rot. On May 15th the school authorities of the cities, counties, and towns of Kentucky and Tennessee have been requested to announce rooster day to the scholars and it is expected that it will be observed. It is expected that other states will follow the lead of their two southern sisters and that rooster days will be pretty generally established.

The department advises that on the 1st of May all male birds be either killed, sold or confined until the 1st of December or as late as the 1st of January in some localities, inasmuch as it is not necessary to the laying qualities of a hen that a rooster be maintained in the flock. Moreover, his presence during those months means fertile eggs, which mean bad eggs and the consequent loss to the producer and the consumer.

### COTTON MILLS SHOULD BURN EGYPTIAN COTTON SEED

The federal horticultural board has issued a notice to all cotton mills, to burn all seed that may be found in bales of imported Egyptian cotton. These seeds are likely to contain the larvae of the pink boll worm which is very destructive to American cotton. The number of seeds of Egyptian cotton found in a bale of Egyptian lint is probably small and the presence of any seed in such bales is due to faulty ginning. Ginning and storing, however, does not kill the larvae of the pink boll worm, which has been known to withstand storage in cotton seed for more than seven months.

So dangerous to the cotton crop of the United States is the pink boll worm regarded that on May 28, 1913, a quarantine was promulgated designed to prevent the introduction into the United States of this worm by forbidding the importation of cotton seed from all foreign countries excepting two regions in Mexico. Since that date several shipments of cotton seed infested by this worm have been intercepted and destroyed.

The horticultural board has begun an investigation to determine the amount of infestation by the pink boll worm in seed introduced. An agent will visit the northern and southern mills for this purpose. The elimination of the danger by improved methods of ginning or possibly by further quarantine regulations will have early consideration.

### MAINE POTATOES AND POWDERY SCAB

An important announcement regarding a quarantine against all Maine potatoes has just been issued. Quarantine is declared to become effective August 1, 1914, on account of the powdery scab disease in that state, particularly in Aroostook county. After August 1st, no common or Irish potatoes can be moved out of Maine except under regulations which the department of agriculture will publish shortly. Powdery scab has been prevalent for some time among Maine