Making the Fur Seal Abundant

United States Deputy

Commissioner of HE fifteenth of December, 1911, was the time set for the formal adoption of one of the most important international conservation measures that has ever been effected. Pursuant to a convention or treaty concluded Washington on July 7. 1911, by the United States, Great Britain, Russia, and Japan, the fur seals of the north Pacific Ocean will receive for the first time a form of protection that has been shown to be absolutely necessary, and is guarananteed by these four great

years. The agreement prohibits absolutely pelagic sealing, or the killing of fur seals while in the water, and places the legitimate killing of surplus male seals on land under the direct control of the

powers for a term of 15

governments interested. This convention insures the rescue of the depleted fur-seal herds from commercial extinction; prohibits the citizens or subjects of the contracting powers from engaging in a wasteful, cruel occupation, and removes a long-standing disturbance of international good-

Fur seals inhabit certain parts of both the northern and southern hemispheres, but the most important herds live in the north Pacific, represent three distinct but closely related species, and are known as the Alaskan, Russian and Japanese fur seals, respectively. Although the northern seals roam widely on the high seas, they always resort for breeding purposes to certain definite bits of land, and it is this habit which gives particular nations property rights in them and has created several international complications.

The Japanese seals visit no land except Robben Island and certain islands of the Kurile chain; the Russian seals never go to other shores than those of the Commander Islands, off the coast of Kamchatka; and the Alaskan seals, after distributing themselves over the eastern part of the Pacific Ocean as far south as southern California, make an annual pilgrimage to islands in Bering Sea.

Of all the fur seals, the most numerous and important are those of Alaska, which came to the United States with all the other resources of the territory when Russia ceded her juris-The Alaskan fur seals have for many years been the subject of protracted national and international discussion, and during the years 1910 and 1911 came in for an unusual amount of attention. In addition to the consideration received during the diplomatic negotiations resulting in the treaty already mentioned. Congress has enacted a new law relating to the seal islands, a new dispensation has come in the administration of the islands. and the government as represented by the Bureau of Fisheries has for the first time engaged in the business of taking and marketing seal skins.

"new dispensation" includes permanent scientific observation and control of the herd. discretionary authority to suspend all killing. and discretionary power to lease the scaling privileges or to exploit them as a government monopoly.

The only land to which the Alaskan fur seals ever resort is the group of small, rocky islands lying in Bering Sea 215 miles north of Unalaska Island, the nearest land. These bits of bleak land have come to be popularly known as the Seal Islands, from their most conspic uous feature; but among geographers they are called the Pribilof Islands, in honor of the Russian navigator who, in 1786, while in the employ of a Kamchatkan trading company, followed the migrating seals and ascertained for the first time where they resorted.

At the time of the discovery of the Pribilofs there were no human inhabitants. As soon as the Russians began to take sea skins they transferred thereto from the Aleutian Islands a number of natives to do the manual labor, and from time to time established small colonies at various convenient points. The present population numbers about 300

on the two islands. When the seal islands came into our custody

the fur seals thereon constituted the most valuable aquatic resource that any government ever possessed. Owing to the immense body of animals present and the difficulty of counting with any degree of accuracy, estimates of the size of the herd at that time necessarily differ widely, the extremes being two million and seven million. It is safe to assume that the number was between two and a half and four million, distributed on 20 to 30 rookeries.

At the close of the season of 1911 the Alaskan seal herd consists of not more than 150,000 individuals of all ages.

This appalling dwindling of the herd has occasioned much concern and has subjected the government to much unfavorable criticism, because the government has exercised full and continuous control during all the intervening years up to the present date. It will be seen, however, that the criticism is not justified, for the reason that the decline and decimation of the herd came through causes operating when the seals were on the high seas and beyond the protecting care of their foster father.

It is furthermore a fact that the government took active steps to secure adequate protection for the seals when away from the Pribilofs, and that its efforts were frustrated chiefly by the results of an unfortunate international

Although the seals are easily killed by the methods adopted by man for their destruction on sea and land, they are capable of withstanding great privation and of undergoing extraordinary muscular exertion.

To maintain themselves during winter in the tempestous north Pacific without resorting to

land is in itself no small accomplishment for air-breathing animals. The females, leaving the islands in November, go further south than any other members of the berd, and in December appear off southern California, where they remain until March. They then begin their long return journey, reaching the islands early in June.

Within two days of their arrival on the rookeries the cows give birth to their pups. Not until ten or twelve days have elapsed do they return to the water or take any food. Then, after washing and playing near the islands, they make their first long trip to the feeding grounds, coming back to the rookeries after three or four days. Thereafter throughout the season the cows make regular feeding trips at intervals of five to ten days.

The seals subsist chiefly on squid, but also on herring, smelt, salmon, pollock, and other kinds of fish, which are caught and eaten in the water. They have prodigious appetites and gorge themselves whenever the opportu-

On the approach of cold weather, the cows and pups leave the islands together. Up to that time the pups have subsisted solely on milk, and they then have to learn to catch their own food, consisting of fish and squid. Inasmuch as the natural mortality among the pups in their first year is fully 50 per cent, it is evident that they experience many vicissitudes in the tempestous seas to which they commit themselves. The males follow shortly after, but some remain about the islands throughout the winter in mild seasons, and the natives always depend on seals for food in December and January.

Fur scals and hair seals have always been regarded as legitimate objects of exploitation, and all governments having real or assumed property rights in herds of seals have sanctioned their killing, under restriction, for fur, leather, oil, food, etc.

Beginning in 1786 and continuing until the sale of Alaska, Russians were almost continuously engaged in killing fur seals on the Pribilof Islands. In the earlier years there was a promiscuous scramble among rival companies, so that to maintain order and properly regulate the taking of seals the government was forced in 1799 to give the privilege to a single company, created by imperial decree and having among its shareholders members of the imperial family and the nobility. This association, known as the Russian-American company, enjoyed a monopoly of this business as long as Russia had control of Alaska. An ukase issued by Alexander I in 1821 for the regulation of the company had as one of its features the prohibition of foreign vessels within 100 miles of the Russian coasts and

islands. This ukase involved Russia in a dispute with the United States and Great Britain, resulting in the treaties of 1824 and 1825, which recognized Russia's claim to jurisdiction over the whole of Bering Sea, Okhotsk Sea, and other water inclosed by Russian territory.

ON THE BEACH

Fisheries

POORERY ON ST PAUL

TOSTAND

From the outset the company placed a rational limit on the number of animals killed each year, and in the light of later experience it is evident that the herd would have been fully able to sustain the annual harvest of skins if these had been taken only from the males. But males and females alike were slaughtered in ignorance or disregard of the polygamous character of the seals, and as early as 1806 it was necessary to suspend operations for two years in order to permit

the herd to recuperate. When killing was resumed, however, it was along the same destructive lines, and the mighty fur-seal host continued to dwindle until by 1834 its numbers were reduced to onefifteenth or one-twentieth of those present in the first years after the discovery of the islands. The suspension of all killing for a term of years then ensued, and by the time operations were resumed the company officials had come to realize that the females should be protected, and later the sacrifice of old bulls and young pups was stopped.

The result was a remarkable recuperation and increase in the herd that afford a valid basis for the belief that speedy recovery of the decimated herds of Alaska, Russia, and Japan may follow the elimination of the factor responsible for their present condition, namely, the indiscriminate killing of males and females at sea. When Russia ceded her jurisdiction over Alaska, the Pribilof fur-seal herd had attained a degree of prosperity closely approaching its condition at the time of its discovery, and we thus came into possession of a resource but little impaired and had a knowledge of its significant history to guide us in its treatment.

It is a cause for congratulation that no coun try has dealt with its seal life in a more intelligent, humane, and zealous manner than the United States, and it was a cruel fate that for so many years rendered our efforts futile. The only occasion when there was any laxity in our administration of the seal islands was during the first years of our possession, when the government was still unorganized anywhere in the territory and various private companies landed parties on the Pribliofs and took seal skins without any government supervision or restriction. It was in that year that the largest killing in the history of the islands was made; the number of skins obtained was probably not less than 300,000, and may have reached 375,000; but this take was not indis-

criminate, was confined to bachelors, and hac no effect on the permanence of the herd.

Although the indiscriminate killing of seals in the sea had been going on from very early times, this business was not extensive, was conducted by natives using spears in their canoes, and had no appreciable effect on the

Special inquiry made by the government showed that in different years from 70 to over 90 per cent of the seals killed at sea, either on the northwest coast or in Bering Sea, were

females. What pelagic hunting then meant to the seal herd when so large a fleet was engaged, and what it has meant recently when the fleet was larger in proportion to the number of seals, may be appreciated when it is stated (1) that for every seal killed and secured by the hunters not less than two seals were killed and lost because they sank before the hunters could lay hold of them, while many that were wounded and escaped died later; (2) that for every adult female killed on the way to the islands in spring an unborn pup was sacrificed; (3) that for every female killed after the herd had reached the islands a pup on shore was left to die a lingering death by starvation, and a pup to be born the next season was likewise sacrificed.

The government was not slow to realize the damage done to the seal herd by pelagic sealing, and was led to assume jurisdiction over the entire American side of Bering Sea and to regard as poachers any persons found hunting seals therein. The seizure of vessels flying the United States and British flags followed, and there grose a controversy with Great Britain, which culminated in the reference of the case to an international tribunal of arbitration that met in Paris in 1893. The award of the arbitration court was against the United States on both of the main contentions, namely, the Bering Sea is a closed sea, and that the property right in the seal herd warranted the government in protecting the seals while on the high seas.

Since the award of the Paris tribunal the case of the fur-seal herd has gone from bad to worse. The United States government early showed its good faith by prohibiting its citizens from engaging in the lucrative industry of pelagic sealing; but the subjects of all other countries were permitted to do so, and it was the injection of a new factor, Japan, that contributed more than any other cause to the decimation of our seal herd.

The fur-seal problem with which the United States government now has to deal presents several phases. The most important duty the responsible officials have to perform is to conserve and increase the seal herd. This involves continuous care, study, and observation; the determination of the actual condition and needs of the herd, and the application of the results of scientific and economic investigation to the welfare of the seals.

A scarcely less important duty, and one that is in no respect antagonistic to the first, is to provide a revenue and to utilize a highly useful resource at the time when that resource possesses the greatest market value. This involves the judicious killing of the male seals when they are two or three years old and the disposal of their pelts to the best advantage. A third duty is to ascertain what are the real needs of the helpless native inhabitants of the seal islands, and to give them the air that is best suited for their mental, moral and physical natures.

Recent criticism of the government's policy of taking the skins of seals in view of the depleted condition of the herd is based on deficient knowledge. The fur seal being a highly polygamous animal, and males and females being born in equal numbers, it follows that under the conditions that have prevailed and still continue the number of males produced is far in excess of the requirements of nature for the perpetuation of the species.

The preservation and increase of the seal herd is entirely compatible with judicious sacrifice of a limited number of young male seals each year, and this is quite as true when the herd is depleted as when the rookeries are of at once doubling the capacity of crowded to their full capacity. When the pres- the street. Here is a problem which ence of a sufficient reserve is determined by responsible officers of the government, the utilization of the surplus males for their pelts and incidentally for native food is justified and demanded by common sense, and fulfills utmost demands of both the spirit and the letter of genuine conservation.

If not a single male seal were to be killed on the islands or at sea during the next five years, not a single additional seal would be produced as a result of that course. If not a single male seal were to be killed on the Islands or at sea during the next 20 years, not a single seal would be added to the herd that will not be added if the present policy of restricted killing of surplus males is continued.

The two men fairly fell upon each other when they had told their names.

"Mamma, why is it that the women "You are too young to understand,

lome Town haking as ling powd in growd the found

MEANS END OF SMALL TOWN

William Allen White Sounds Warning Against the Big City Retail Mail Order Houses.

Writing to the convention of the Southwestern Lumberman's association, held recently at Kansas City,

William Allen White says: "I am exceedingly sorry that I cannot attend your convention. It seems to me that the lumbermen of this section are undertaking a work that should commend them to all good citi-

"The preservation of the home trade to the home town carries with it the preservation of many of our American institutions.

"It seems to me that a lot of good things in American life will pass if the country town passes. And it will pass fust so surely as centralization of retail mail order business in cities continues.

"The American country town, the town of from one hundred to one hundred thousand people, preserves better than the crowded city and better than the lonely ranch and isolated farm life, the things that make America great.

"Here in these country towns the spirit of neighborliness is the prevailing spirit. Men come to know one another and when any two human beings come to know one another, in the one who is intelligent and wise respect always rises for the other. To know one's fellows always is to sympathize with them. Neighborliness spells fraternity.

"The American country town with its broad circle of friendships, with its close, homely, simple relations between men, with its spirit of co-operation and with its economic status that permits the creation of no indecently rich and no abjectly poor, the American country town, it seems to me, is the most hopeful of our American institutions.

"To destroy that town, furnishing the market for the farmer and giving steady employment to labor, means a reorganization of our commercial, social and industrial life that will be revolutionary-and more a matter of doubtful value.

"The mail order house therefore becomes a menace to this country, the mail order house unrestrated will kill our smaller towns, creating great cities with their terrible contrasts of life, with their cruel social relations, with their inevitable caste feeling that come from the presence of strangers who are rich and poor living side by

The English Sparrow.

The fact that insect-eating birds are less plentiful in cities is true, but I believe that the conditions are rap idly improving, says a writer on civic beauty. Intelligent nature study has done much to lessen the arder of the small boy who formerly used his slingshot and airgun to such harmful ad-

It is probable, too, that the English sparrow has done nearly as much as the small boy to make the life of song birds miserable in the cities. I doubt, however, if the sparrow is as black as he is painted, and I sadly fear that some published opinions of him have been biased by the writers' loss of early morning sleep. I know for a fact that the English sparrow is far more of an insect-eating bird than he has the credit of being. I have observed them extensively and bird for bird I know that he is a more valuable species from an entomological standpoint than is our wellbeloved robin. Were it not for the joy the red breast brings when he comes to us with each returning spring. I think that we could do with out him very nicely. He destroys few injurious insects, eats much fruit and literally gorges himself on our soilimproving fishing worms.

One more influence against the presence of birds in cities should not go unmentioned. The peaceful (in day time) house cat is one of the worst enemies of birds we have, and should be bunished.

Double Decking Streets. Chief Engineer Goodrich of the bureau of incumbrances of the department of bighways, New York, has proposed a plan for the double decking of Forty-second street, New York, between Fifth and Lexington avenue. The street is one of the most congested in the city, there being probably no piace in the world where so many systems of transportation center as here. The double decking of the street will give an opportunity for separating the traffic, to say nothing will have to be met and successfully solved, as the modern office building, 20 to 30 stories in height, gradually replaces the older buildings. Some of the downtown streets of New York are already congested almost to a standstill, so that traffic at times is nearly impossible.

Value of Street Illumination. Urging the extension of lighting

service along country highways, and in small villages, the Electric Review says: "The tendency of the times is toward better street illumination; real estate values rise and outside residents are attracted by it; and apart from the reduction of accidents and the improved conditions of public safety afforded, the rural community as a live center if it devotes a reasonable sum yearly to meeting the lighting problem with courage and far sightedness."

Club to Promote Civic Beauty. The executive committee of the Oak Park (III.) Citizens' club has formed a bureau for listing all vacant lots in the village to be rented for use as flower gardens. The aim is to make beautiful places out of what have been hitherto weed patches.

recommended by leading physicians and chemists. It compiles with all the purformed by the property of the prop

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What ought not to be done, do not

even think of doing.-Epictetus.

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Held Prisoner All Morning

School Teacher's Visitor Long Occupled Undignified, Not to Say Embarrassing, Position.

The village schoolmaster had incurred the wrath of the mother of one of his scholars, and she arrived at her indignation loudly and intermina- ing upon the door reached them from bly. At first the master tried to pacify the distance, but the much-tried man her with reasoning, but when at the took no notice, thinking to himself, tague Hastings of the British army battle.

end of half an hour there was no sign of abatement of the storm he took her gently but firmly by the arm, guided her right out of the porch, and locked the outermost door upon her. As master and scholars returned to their work, the sound of angry exposthe school and insisted on voicing tulations and of knocks and hammer

that."

the master went to unlock the door, expression on her face that baffles description. He had shut her skirt into the door when he locked it, and kept her a prisoner all the morning!

Strange Reunion of Veterans.

"She will go when she is tired of finished dinner at the Hotel Astor, New York, he was surprised to find When at the end of the morning a little gray-haired man in the lobby standing at attention with his hand he found his enemy sitting calmiy on to his forehead as he passed out of the ground, waiting for him with an the dining room. He stopped to learn the reason for the salute and found that the man, Peter Farrell, who is a watchman in the hotel, had fought with him in a battle with the Zulus in 1878 when a majority of the English party was killed. It was the first When Maj. George Edwards Mon- time the two men had met since the

For more than three hours they discussed the memorable battle. When they parted both agreed that they wanted to see each other again. Heading Him Off.

never have any secret societies?" darling-but don't ask your papa or I shall not bring home the box of candy I promised you."