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OBSERVATIONS.

The Audubon club movement has awakened the interest of lovers of nature all over this country. In England and France the birds are protected and also in Germany. The slaughter of birds has been most terrible in North and South America and in Africa. The war upon the Rossate tern which inhabits the North Atlantic American coast has almost exterminated the species. From New York to Maine they are rare where once they flocked in aquatic sociability. Last summer five Indians were employed by a wholesale New York millinery house to kill these birds. Their average kill a day for the season was 500 birds. They left their bodies on their way north, stripping from each bird the pinkish feathers from the breast. Like the track of a famine they blazed their way with skeletons. The valuable function which this bird performed in the floral economy of the North Atlantic states will hereafter be unperformed and the consequences will be disastrous even if the sequence of the events which was caused by the slaughter of the bird be hidden. In England twenty-five or thirty years ago the government thought the penalty for killing hawks and owls might be removed without destroying the balance of power. Indiscriminate slaughter followed. With the disappearance of their enemies, the field mice, shrews and gophers increased in such quantities that pasturage and grain were

immediately affected. The sheep died by hundreds and Johnny Bull was taught a lesson he never forgot. We are a little slower to learn over here. The game birds are protected by law because their destruction in the nesting season would have an immediate effect on the market and upon sport. But the law which protects robins, meadow-larks, thrushes and field birds in general is not enforced. The murderous small boy who is only really happy when he is killing or torturing something can kill as many birds as his skill, which, providentially, is as undeveloped as his sympathy, will permit. With the extinction of the birds in the east, the army of tuft-hunters is gradually working its way westward and it is only a matter of time when the fields will be silent save for the shrilling insect, safe to lurch all day long on tree or grain.

Prof. Bruner's mission to South America is to find out a way to kill insects as well as the birds used to. South America is the home of bright plumaged birds and hundreds of companies have been organized to supply the increasing demand for wings and breasts on hats and bonnets. The regret for such a state of things has been futile, until now, to improve it. At the present time the death of the birds has been considered by the Women's clubs of the east. The Audubon society has been started and all thinking women are joining it. The membership roll is increasing every day. By next fall the leaders calculate that there will be a perceptible decrease in the demand for birds. If the mysterious source of of fashion could be reached the mission of the society would be accomplished. The leaders of fashion do not make it, but they have a negative influence. They might not be able to make the wearing of fishes and mice on hats fashionable, but by not doing so they render such a custom very bad form. In every place small or large there are those who have an instinctive feeling for color form and style. The dowdy multitude watches them with an imitative eye. Their influence in a matter of the kind under consideration is most valuable. Among the members of the young Audubon society of Lincoln there are a number of such leaders who have pledged themselves to discourage by example and influence the wearing of "the sad, dead bodies of birds" as ornaments. Many reply to the request to join the society with the remark that, "People ought to be allowed to wear what pleases them." The south thought slavery was no business of the north's and the north had to take a club and reason it out. The destruction of so beautiful and essential a part of nature as the birds is every-bodie's business and the women of this country are going to prevent it,—with a club. There is another *raison d'etre*

for clubs besides the studying of Roman history and literature. Individual effort, unless it be inspired, is ineffectual. The common ever day woman in a club can organize effort so that it will clear a city, ornament it, and preserve the lives of the birds. Unless the club discipline and opportunities result in blessings of the kind enumerated it will not become the institution that it seems likely to. The wearing of birds is a reproach to the sex as slavery was to the south. It belies gentleness, womanliness and reason and the organization, supplied by the club will enable the sex to accomplish, this and all other reforms.

Miss Cather has written a story, where in the scene is laid in Brownville "Brownville," she says, "had happened because of the steamboat trade, and when the channel of the river had become so uncertain and capricious that navigation was impossible, Brownville became impossible too, and all the prosperity that the river had given, it took back again into its muddy arms. And ever since, overcome by shame and remorse it had been trying to commit suicide by burying itself in the sand. * * * So it was that the tide went out at Brownville and the village became a little Pompeii buried in bonded indebtedness. The sturdy pioneers moved away, and the river rats drifted in and bought up the big houses for a song, cut down the tall oaks and cedars for firewood, and plowed up the terraces for potato patches. Brownville was not always the sleepy, deserted town that it is today, full of empty buildings and idle men and boys growing up without aim or purpose. * * * It is a young town, with a brilliant past."

These gifted ladies who have moved out of Nebraska do not refer to us with much pride. Mrs. Peattie, Miss Cather and probably Miss Gaylord, who is also making a name for herself, do shake their heads and mourn when Nebraska is their theme. It is bad politics to tell stories about one's native state. Mr. Bryan, Mr. Sterling Morton, even Charlie Dawes, who only lived here in the moulting period, do much better by us. Mrs. Peattie's stories give Nebraska a brassy sky, a choking air, burnt out fields, watched by desperate farmers with starving wives and wan babies. The actual deep, tender blue of the sky 300 days of the year, the beefy farmer legislators, the buxom wives and apple checked babies are not picturesque and there is not one story out of a hundred in which such a reality can be used. The hot winds and the drought are good material, and in literature they have come to be characteristic of the west. If it were not for the politicians afor-said, who are not hampered by any artistic limitations, the west is in the way of getting a reputation that will injure the value of real estate. Although

many a western town is torpid, it has life and vigor. Any one of a number of events not at all unlikely to happen will create activity without much effort. Compare a western town in the path of a flood of immigration which has swept and will sweep again from Massachusetts to California, with a town in the White mountains or with one of those places out of the beaten track in the state of Ohio. In the west, however small the place, there is enterprise and encouragement for any endeavor. The atmosphere is speculative. Nothing is bounded by tradition, by what other men have tried and failed to do. Having turned a desert into arable land, air-ships, expositions and universities are everyday events. Verily the breadth of the horizon, the extraordinary purity of the air everlastingly rinsed in sunlight, is stimulating. When once the boundaries are removed from human effort as they have been in the west, as they are from every new people, creative effort is stimulated. Nebraska more than any other western state has shown her susceptibility to this influence, and the gifted writers who expatiate upon the misery of living in Nebraska are themselves examples of what residence in Nebraska can make out of one.

If correspondents and special writers can be believed the new tariff bill is unsatisfactory to everybody but stockholders in the largest trusts. William E. Curtis in the Chicago Record says in regard to schedule E which relates to sugar: "Under the McKinley law sugar, from reciprocity countries, was free. Under the present law of 1894 the duty is 41 per cent ad valorem. The imports last year were valued at \$73,034,003, and produced a revenue of \$29,910,016. The sugar trust next to the Standard Oil the largest manufacturing corporation in the United States, is the only buyer, the only beneficiary of this duty. The Dingley bill not only protects the trust in its monopoly by imposing a duty of one eighth of a cent a pound on refined sugar from all countries, but imposes one eighth more, or one fourth of a cent a pound upon refined sugar from Germany, France, Austria and Argentine Republic, and other countries from which all our imported refined sugar comes, because their governments pay a bounty upon all sugar exported."

"A simple mathematical calculation will show what the protection of one-fourth of a cent a pound upon \$4,000,000,000 pounds of sugar is worth to the trust, but that is only a part of the damage that is done by schedule E of the Dingley bill. By imposing the extra duty upon German, French and Austrian sugar our congress provokes retaliation from those countries in the form of embargoes upon our breadstuffs and provisions. The trust makes a profit of \$10,000,000. The farmers of the