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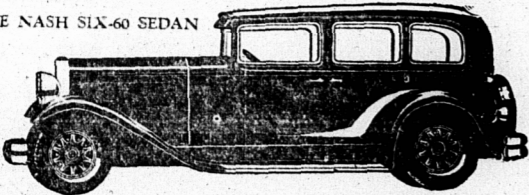
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NEWSY NOTES

BY AGRICOLA

TWO OLD BOOKS

A news item states that one O. E. Harris, of Sanator, S. D., has what may be the oldest book in that State. "It is called Iamblichus and is said to contain mysterious knowledge of Egypt, Chaldea, and Assyria. . . . It was published just 60 years after the Gutenberg production with movable types. It was produced in Lyons, France, by John Trestum in 1552." The scribe is astray at times. Iamblichus is not the name of a book, but of a philosopher who lived in Coele-Syria, and died, it is thought, about 333 A. D. The book attributed to him (though there is much doubt about this) is the Liber de Mysteriis, a system of philosophy tinged largely with superstitions concerning the gods. The world, according to his belief, was peopled with guardian divinities, both of nations and individuals, influencing natural events, possessing and communicating knowledge of the future, and accessible to prayers and offerings. The "Liber" was translated into Latin in 1497, (which, by the way, was the year in which Gutenberg invented his movable types, and not 1492 as suggested above) and was several times reprinted.

This may be the oldest book in South Dakota, but P. E. I. can "go one better." The writer has a book whose title-page commences "Dionodori Siculi historici clarissimi, Bibliothecae"—"a history of old things both fabulous and true." It was printed "Parisii, apud Simonem Colinaeum, 1531." The frontispiece is a picture of "Father Time"—labelled "Tempus" so that there may be no mistake—but he is not the conventional old gentleman with the beard, long cloak and scythe: this is a satyr-like Time, with cloven hoofs, and to indicate his speed, wings. He has the scythe, though, and is doing great work on the grass. A scroll in Latin (as is the rest of the book) intimates that "Fortitude alone blunts this sharp edge." The dedication is to "Nicolaus Quinto Pontifici Maximo S. D.," and this would fix the time of its translation (from Greek into Latin) as between 1447 and 1455, A. D.

Dionodorus Siculus was a Greek historian who undertook to write a world history, which, after thirty years' work, he completed in forty volumes. Only six of these are now extant and my copy has them bound in one. Dionodorus is said to have written Greek in a clear and concise but prosy fashion: the Latin of the translation is only a little more difficult than that of Caesar. The account of the aboriginal Britons, in the sixth book, is most interesting and readable.

ENEMIES OF THE BIRDS

We have seen the dangers to which the smaller insectivorous birds are exposed from weather conditions, accidents, epidemics and predatory mammals: we now turn to those arising from their own kind—that is, from other birds.

Birds, in the breeding season, feel the need of a nitrogenous diet: the drain on the system during the production of eggs, can best be met by some form of "meat scrap." While the smaller birds at such times betake themselves to a diet of worms, grubs and caterpillars, — thereby earning the gratitude of the farmer, the orchardist, and the gardener—some of the larger birds have contracted the murderous habit of eating the nestlings and eggs of other birds that are too small to defend their homes. As is well known, the Blue Jay, the Crow and the Grackle are the most notorious of these cannibals.

The Jay certainly has its defenders who point out that it is an efficient caterpillar hunter; but despite this, those who have watched this bird long and carefully, concur in the statement of its nest-robbing proclivities. Whenever it is protected either by the law or by the indifference of mankind, the smaller birds are sure to become victims and their numbers will decrease. The good which this bird does is more than counterbalanced by the harm.

The Crow, as Jack Miner has

more than once pointed out, is even worse than the Jay, and the fact is often brought home to us by this bird's adroit raids on chickens in the poultry yard. That Crows are becoming too abundant on the Island is evidenced by their unusual numbers in this northerly neighborhood during the past winter. As their food supply becomes insufficient southwards, the hardier birds seek "fresh fields and pastures new." Winter is the best time for trapping them, and their nesting season for shooting, as at that time their natural wariness seems to be in abeyance. Trapping, however, would have to be on a large scale, and it is regrettable that no properly constituted authority has been found willing to reduce the numbers of these pests.

The Grackle or Crow-blackbird, which is resident here in summer, is known to plunder the nests of other birds. A grackle will diligently "comb" a piece of shrubbery till it has found a nest; it then sends out a call, easily distinguishable from its ordinary cry, and other grackles flock to the scene. While one is distracting the parent bird, the others rob the nest. Apart from this, grackles are very destructive to grain which they feed upon in the field and in the stock.

In Manitoba, where they are abundant, Prof. Nash has seen fields with the grain threshed out for the space of ten yards in width all round, by these birds. Long after they had disappeared from my own district, I found them destroying the stocks on the south side of the Island, and it is this (rather than any care for the lesser birds) which will ultimately rouse public opinion against them.

There is a bird, the European Starling, which threatens to be worse than the grackle. It has been unwisely imported into the United States and is pretty generally distributed there: it has found its way into Ontario, and in time we shall be troubled with it here. In England I have seen it flying "in clouds." It feeds on grain and drives away all smaller birds.

The day-flying owls—the great Horned Owl and the Snowy Owl—are bird killers, but as they are rare, they are only minor enemies. All the hawks take toll of bird life, but as these only attack the adults the bird has a sporting chance. The owls, with the exception of those already noticed, are so useful in destroying rats and mice that they should be given every protection.

The last foe in my list is the common garter snake (Thamnophis) which feeds, to a limited extent on the eggs or young of birds that nest in the ground or in low shrubbery. We protect our "sitting" hens and their brood in every possible way, but from infertility, disease, accidents and other causes, poultrymen tell us that it takes five eggs to produce one adult. What the loss must be among the small birds, unprotected and encircled with enemies, no one can compute. They are decreasing, and no wonder.

Two things we can, and will do, when we are wise enough: that is feed our winter birds and to that extent fortify them against the weather; and attract them round our homes (where they are comparatively safe) by putting out bird-boxes, so that they may rear their young in peace.

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MALPEQUE

On Sunday April 5, the Rev. Frederick Williamson of Keir Memorial Church, announced his intention of leaving his charge here in three weeks time. Mr Williamson's resignation will be greatly regretted by the members of his congregation and by other friends of his community. His ability as a speaker is generally recognized and it will doubtless be difficult to fill his place in the hearts of his people.

Mr George MacKay, accompanied by his son Master Kenneth, left here

on Saturday afternoon for Summerside. On arrival there Kenneth was taken to the Prince County Hospital where he was successfully operated on for appendicitis—Kenneth's many friends hope for his speedy recovery.

Mrs Othmer Simpson, Baltic, accompanied by her daughter, Miss Marion left on Tuesday morning for Montreal, where Miss Marion will enter the Royal Victoria Hospital for treatment. Miss Marion's many friends sincerely regret her illness and trust that she may be benefited by the treatment.

Mrs Earle MacKay, Sea View, is the guest for a few days of her mother, Mrs Dan Bearloto.

The Rev. E. M. Aitken, Mrs Aitken and two children, Mildred and Douglas left on Monday for Charlottetown where they will spend several days the guest of Mr Aitken's parents, Mr and Mrs J. C. Aitken, Grafton St.

FREHISTORIC MEN WELL VERSED IN MINE WORK.

WASHINGTON, April 17 (U. P.)—Evidence that man had reached a well-developed stage of mining activity even when mastodons and other prehistoric animals roamed the earth found through reports of the discovery of a series of ancient mine workings in Natal, South Africa. The character of the mine workings, as reported to Assistant Trade Commissioner DuWayne Clark at Johannesburg, indicates that they were being operated before the arrival of the Zulu nations in South Africa.

Hv George McManus

BY GOLLY, HE ATE THE GOLDFISH!