

NEWSY NOTES

BY AGRICOLA

A NATURALIST'S CALENDAR

Winter, so say the astronomers, begins on December 21st or 22nd; which is also the shortest day. But the ordinary observer winter commences not later than the first of the month, and wild snowstorms, gales, or sometimes rainstorms, will lead point to this belief. The barometer, foretelling these and other disturbances, is usually erratic and occasionally falls an inch and a half before a "blizzard." Of late years December has been milder and a "good old-fashioned Christmas" is not so common now, and is not relished when it does come. The naturalist now studies his specimens—if he has collected any—in the vicinity of the kitchen fire where it is more comfortable than in the great open spaces. The wild geese are still going south, and the birds of the Northland visit us in storms drive them down. Otherwise, Nature is sleeping a long sleep till Spring wakes all the earth. The observations for December are mostly weather-records. Dec. 1, 1915. Wind S. and a heavy day. A good fall of snow on the night of Dec. 2, 1927. Snowing, but mild. Dec. 2, 1913; mild, open weather all this month. Wild geese going South. Dec. 3, 1919; on this date Hillsboro River open in the centre. Mild. Dec. 6th, 1916; maximum 48. Dec. 6th, 1917; four thousand tons of ammunition exploded in Halifax Harbor and laid the North side of the town in ruins, killing 1,500 persons and injuring 3,000. The shock was felt in Charlottetown, and at Sydney, 200 miles from Halifax. Earthquake shocks along the Pacific coast from S. America to Victoria. B. C. Dec. 6th, 1918. Many quakes and auroras that were felt here. Dec. 6th, 1920; roads boggy like Spring. Electric storms on Dec. 6th, and Dec. 9th, 1924. English Daisy (Bellis) still in bloom. Dec. 7th, 1923; up to this date the month was very mild. Wind N. W., Dec. 11th, 1915, drift, heavy. A cold spell with N. W. Dec. 12th, 1917; at 8 a. m. it was 1 degree above zero. Fluorowood Hospital burned, three lives lost. Dec. 13th, 1931. Thermometer at zero at 9 a. m. on Dec. 13th, 1933. The night of Dec. 15th, 1916 was signalized by a severe frost, "rubbed in" by a gale said to be 60 m. p. h. Maximum

below zero on Dec. 17, 1922. Rain today Dec. 18th, 1915. Sixteen below zero on Dec. 18th, 1919. Observed cross flying on North Shore, Dec. 18th, 1930. "Ten below," Dec. 19th, 1923. Observed two large flocks of Wild Geese going South-west, Dec. 23rd, 1927. "Unhealthy weather, foggy, mild, ground sloppiness," Dec. 21st, 1916. How many of the good folk of Mount Herbert remember the night of Dec. 22nd, 1916. A Christmas Tree festival was held in the Consolidated School, and when it was over the audience emerged to a pitiless wind that even the horses could scarcely face. That was a night Cross flying and vocal, Dec. 22nd, 1922. A cold spell, 3 degrees below zero on the eve of Dec. 23rd, 1917. Another memorable day, Tuesday Dec. 23rd, 1930; a great many people went in cars to the City for the "Christmas market," but in the afternoon an Easterly snow-storm blew up and filled the roads with snow. The cars were abandoned all along the routes from the City, and the occupants taken charge of by the "Good Samaritans" with sleighs. It was noticed, on Dec. 23rd, 1932, that the snow taken this year were small and thin. This may have been due to failure of oil-grass and the plankton which it supports. December 25th, 1918, was a "green Christmas" all right, with rain and mist, and the wind S. E. It was the great influenza year, too. No sleighing that year till Dec. 26th, 1920. St. Lawrence still open. Dec. 28th, 1918; and Hillsboro River free of ice. Ten below zero, on Dec. 28th, 1926. Zero on the morning of Dec. 29th, 1917; a hard winter with the mail irregular. (Terrible weather on the European battle fronts. Dec. 1917.) Dec. 29th, 1923, and Dec. 30th, 1921, had "wild snow storms." With that last entry we have circled the globe and the meteorological records give the impression of a very changeable climate. At most any day of any month may be inclement or spring-like and balmy. Two periods are fairly constant, though: the heat of July, and the cold spell from the middle of January to the end of February. The Local Time of Sunrise and Sunset for December in Latitude 46 degrees North is—Dec. 2nd, 7:22 a. m. 4:16 p. m. 7th, 7:28, 4:15. —12th, 7:32; 4:15 —17th, 7:36; 4:15 —22nd, 7:39; 4:18. —27th, 7:41; 4:21 —31st, 7:42; 4:24. To convert the above to Standard Time, add 11 minutes for Georgetown 12 min. for Charlottetown and 16 min. for St. John's. In taking leave of this subject I quote the colophon appended to Gilbert White's calendar in the Natural History of Selborne:—"In Sese vertitur annus,"—roughly, "the year returns upon itself."

THE RED PLANET MARS

A few days ago this much-debated member of the solar system was in opposition with the sun (May 19); that is, the sun, the earth, and Mars were in line, in the order named. As I write (May 27th) the planet is about 47,242,000 miles away. At the most favorable opposition Mars is only 35,000,000 from the earth, but at times the most unfavorable opposition sees the planet 62,000,000 miles away. This is because the orbit of Mars is a long way from being a circle. This month it is slightly brighter than Sirius. Longfellow, in one of his earlier poems, speaks of the "red planet Mars," really however about three-fifths of its surface is orange in color, varying a little as the transparency of its atmosphere changes. There are good photographs of Mars in the British Astronomer Royal's book, "Worlds Without End;" a book no star-

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox Farming



Last Monday every fox farmer I talked with was glum—expecting a very bad auction in London as a result of the bombing by the Spanish Loyalists of the German warship Deutschland; but the people over there seem unimpressed by shocks of all kinds, because instead of an important market the Hudson's Bay Company's sale on Monday and Tuesday was a corker. Eighty per cent of the entire offering was sold at an average advance of about 7 per cent. Some particular colors and qualities advanced even more than that. The news that I came in contact with since seemed over-joyed. The sales following Hudson's Bay will no European situation has quieted and threat of war is once more relegated to some future period.

It will be news to our readers to know that Louisiana, that immense state of the great Republic to the South, which Napoleon first sold for fifteen million dollars to the United States, claims to produce more fur pelts than the entire Dominion of Canada and Alaska. Trappers' lines within the City of New Orleans draw the pelts yearly. These run out fifteen miles from the City's largest office building to the 5th precinct. On one property alone within that ter and mink are trapped each season. This gigantic estate is owned by Col. R. E. DeMontluisin, who owns more than one-third of the City land and more land in a metropolitan area than any man in the world.

The New Orleans trapper does not face the same hardships as his ancestors. They trap just off a concrete highway and attend picture shows in town at night. He carries his traps into the soggy marsh and runs his lines wading through waist-deep mud. While this is going on his children are attending city schools and his razor should be without. Conspicuous in all these photos is the polar snow-cap, usually but not as the planet's axis is generally tilted to the north. This is the snow-cap, the snow-caps lie the orange yellow areas. Readers of H. G. Wells' "War of the World" may remember the "red weed" that the invading Martians introduced, and that spread as a nuisance over the fertile fields of Britain. To that the reddish hue of the Martian landscape. Now the astronomers have learnt to interpret these areas as desert land. Dark shadows, formerly called seas, are also present, usually to the South of the Martian equator; and one of these, which is shaped like the peninsula of India is named the Syrtis Major. If this is a succession of seas, they would show brilliant reflections when at certain angles to the sun; and this never happens as the Astronomer Royal points out. His opinion is that they are in part atmospheric phenomena, and possibly in part due to local precipitation of rain.

There remain the oft-debated "canals" of Mars. These, says a writer in the Nature Magazine, are objective and have been repeatedly photographed—be they what they may. These "canals" cross the dark markings in all directions another proof that the latter are not seas. Clouds and storms appear in the atmosphere surrounding Mars, and that the planet is in the most favorable opposition. Here it may be observed that such oppositions can only happen in the month of August fifteen or seventeen years apart, and the surface conditions must be studied in the three months before, and the months after such an opposition; six months before, or seventeen years' "Science" moves from point to point. The clouds above-mentioned are transient white spots, often of considerable size. Mars, seen through the best telescopes at present available, gives an image of only one-tenth of an inch. Photographs are therefore taken with enlarging lenses and a further refinement is in the use of ultra-violet and infra-red light. Some curious disclosures are made by the use of the latter method. A photograph taken by ultra-violet light is larger than one taken in infra-red light by the same telescope. The difference in the size of the two images, represents 50 or 60 miles; the smaller image shows clearly the surface markings and corresponds to the solid globe of the planet; while the larger, the ultra-violet image, as clearly corresponds to the atmosphere shell surrounding the planet. On the morning of June 20th, about 6 a. m. A. S. T. there will be a conjunction of Mars and the

wife the beauty parlor or goes to a movie. While the New Orleans fur catch is estimated at 125,000 skins, no accurate figures are available. Col. DeMontluisin through his overseas, collects six muskrat skins per day as toll from each trapper.

The Western Canada Fur Breeders Association has called a convention to take place in Winnipeg June 10th and 11th. A very fine program has been arranged with addresses by outstanding authorities, including Elwyn Ingrams, Fur Sales Manager, Hudson's Bay Company, London, England, Dr. J. A. Allen, V. S. B. V. S.; Winnipeg, Frank G. Ashbrook, Washington, D. C. and others. Fur of Canada is emphasizing the importance of the convention in its May issue in a front page editorial, of which these are extracts.

"In a manner of speaking the industry of fur farming in Canada is challenged by the present time. With this thought in mind the program of the Convention has been arranged so that breeders may hear the truth and tell the truth regarding their industry. Up to the present the industry has progressed by natural growth and by the absence of serious competition. The growth continues. And competition from other countries has brought to us a rude awakening. Reports come that Canadian silver foxes are no longer regarded as the world's finest. The report is confirmed by pelt returns.

What are we going to do about it? We have two alternatives. We can dawdle along as heretofore, refusing to believe the reports of markets and fur men. And in a few years, we can pass on to a comfortable burial of an industry which Canada gave to the world. On the other hand we can get up and fight for that industry. We can show the world that our ranch fur is just as fine as our wild fur. This can be done by a planned improvement of our

present production. It is a definite challenge. As my esteemed friend, Lt.-Colonel Russ Chardler says, "That's fighting talk." No doubt it was a hot day when the Editor dictated that to the stenographer, but there is more of it. This is the way he ends up.

"Of course we are not going out of the fur production industry. We are going to take a new hold of that industry, to make it a better and finer thing than it has ever been before. Canada will show the world the finest foxes in the world and plenty of them. And mink such as No Queen has ever worn. The parents of the animals form here. The food is here. The men and the knowledge are here. We have the climate. Let us all meet at the Winnipeg Convention and take council together so that the action that leads to performance may begin at once."

Noble sentiments, grand thoughts! It appears to the writer I have heard them many times before, but sure as "shootin" the result will be the same. Because one convention with a number of addresses—even though delivered by the cleverest men in the world—is not going to turn the fox industry upside down or change it from its "said to be" lowly position to a commanding lead.

By my mind the only way our silver fox and mink furs can be improved is by hard, conscientious work and plenty of thought on the part of each individual rancher. There is no magic way. Each man must work out his own salvation, pelting out his poorer foxes, keeping his best, acquiring a few if he can afford to, of strains that will not and improve his herd, or else buying trios (two females and 1 male) and keeping the new breeding stock separate, housing properly, feeding properly, giving plenty of water, with forgetting sanitation together with the hundred and one details that make for success.

Sven Klinberg has recently returned from a trip to his native Sweden and also to Norway. While there he visited a number of fur farms and kept his ears and eyes open with the result that he has brought back a pretty true picture of conditions in these Scandinavian countries. In an article in the May Fur of Canada entitled, "Fur Farming in the Scandinavian Countries," Mr. Klinberg gives the result of his observations. This is the meat from the kernel.

"On September 1st, 1929, Norway had 2,500 fur farms with 33,500 silver foxes. On the same date in 1927 the fox farms had increased to 15,000, housing 200,000 adults with 3,000,000 pups estimated. The 1936 Norwegian crop of fox pups was valued at \$7,000,000. Sweden has between 2,500 and 3,000 fox farms with a production of approximately 100,000 pups. There are also fur farms in Finland and other parts of the Baltic. Compared with the production in Manitoba the Swedish production is low. Many of the ranchers consider an average of one-half pup per pen a very fair result. They seem to have more difficulties to overcome in their silver fox farming than in the case in Canada.

The problem of production has received the attention of scientists and ranchers but very little helpful advice has been forthcoming. The lack of production trouble is mostly confined to the southern parts of Sweden and Norway. The northern parts have their difficulties, as in those sections approaching the Arctic Circle, silver foxes moult twice, in the Spring and also at the end of September, before the pelt is prime, the guard hairs fall off. New guard hairs grow in, but the pelt is as a rule, darker and only the odd pelt becomes beautiful. Therefore the pelts from the very north are poor. By heavy feeding it is claimed that a similar feature can be brought about occasionally in the southern parts. The proper reason for this phenomenon is not known, but the present theory is that the bright summer nights characteristic of these northern provinces are responsible. The only means whereby this difficulty so far can be overcome is by

acted is short rations for early pups.

Frequent rains and damp weather is typical for Scandinavia during the fall months. Some years similar weather lasts until mid-December. Their ranching methods must therefore differ from ours. Once the pups are weaned practically all foxes are transferred to shed-pens with wire floors, which in most cases are three feet above the ground to prevent the ammonia fumes from discoloring the pelts. Because of this early transfer small breeding pens have been adopted and in my estimation many are too small. All the shed-pens I saw were of the raised wire-bottom type, although I am told some use pens with the netting on the ground in which cases the pens are well covered and supplied with proper shelves, providing clean and cool resting places, which is so very essential in producing unstained pelts.

With reference to the breeding difficulties enumerated previously there is the possibility that the small pens in vogue are in some measure responsible for the lowered vitality which their troubles indicate. Polygamous mating is extensively resorted to—in some cases a ratio of 1.5—and this practice might also be responsible to a degree. There is also the possibility that the foxes are not yet properly climated. These drawbacks are causing considerable concern.

Numerous local shows are held in the two countries, particularly in Norway, where in 1926 fifty-five shows were staged. These shows have taught the breeder, what to select or secure. Clean sanitary pens are a feature everywhere. This and careful selection of breeders and good housing has contributed largely to placing the Scandinavian pelts in the leading position which their color has given them. As a rule Scandinavian pelts are not heavy. The Scandinavian temperament is suitable for fur farming. Because of the milder climate it is necessary to feed light in order to delay the furring-out process. The frequent rains necessitate completely covered pens and because of economic reasons these are small. These two features are not conducive to the growing of a large fox.

If we now compare these conditions with the same in the Canadian middle West with its dry climate and early winter, we have a decided advantage as we can avail ourselves of large pens and feed heavy, thereby developing the large fox pelts the trade is looking for. The cost of feed is causing Sweden and Norway considerable concern, particularly in the latter country. Intense whale hunting is depleting the supply of whale meal. Prices as yet are not unreasonable, but the supply is very uncertain, particularly during the summer months.

Prices for meats in Norway are about as follows—
Whole meat from 4 to 6 cents per pound.
Beef 12 to 13 cents per pound.
Tripe 4 to 5 cents per pound.
In Sweden horse meat sells at from 4 to 6 cents per pound.
Hearts at 6 cents per pound.
Tripe at 1-2 cents per pound.
Fish at 1 to 1-2 cents per pound.
Liver 12 to 13 cents per pound.

Wool Week—June 14th to 19th

will be a special week during which sheep breeders are asked to cooperate and ship wool to the SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION, CHARLOTTETOWN. If you are not able to ship during this special period, it will be all right to send it in any time before July 1st. THE CANADIAN COOPERATIVE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION LIMITED, which markets your product, will pay through the Provincial Association CASH on delivery for tied, unwashed wool, NOT LESS THAN 22c PER POUND. At the same time, each shipper will participate in any profits that may be derived from the year's sales. Last year's contributors received 2c per pound extra in this way. Kindly observe the following rules: 1. All fleeces with PAPER TWINE OR WOOLEN STRING; DO NOT USE BINDER TWINE; paper twine can be purchased from the Sheep Breeders' Association. Wool should not be washed; each fleece should be tied separately and neatly at the armpits; washing wool lowers its value and gives extra work. Do not pay the freight; in order to reduce freight costs, ship your wool collectively through your Shipping Club, Institute Secretary, or any local group; each shipper's lot should be properly marked. Use old bags or useless rugs; do not send anything of any value. Write your name and address plainly on the shipping ticket; put one ticket inside the sack and another on the outside for fear the outside one may be torn off and then we could not identify your lot; on this ticket also give the number of bales you are shipping. Address all bundles to WOOL GRADING STATION, CHARLOTTETOWN.

The following local agents will take care of your wool and ship to the Association: W. B. McMillan, Alma; Louis McMillan, Miscouche; Cyrus F. Gallant, Wellington; Peter McEaac, Souris; George McInnis, St. Peters; Mont Anner, Montague; W. D. Ross, Uigg.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND SHEEP BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION CHARLOTTETOWN

production their average quality must be raised. They advise the breeder as follows—
1. Do not increase unless you have quality.
2. If quality is lacking rather reduce quantity and secure quality.
3. Diversify the kinds of fur-bearing animals.

They have heeded this latter warning and are now raising blue foxes and they are paying well. In fact, many claim they pay better than low grade silver foxes. Mink is attracting more attention than foxes at present. The mink men at the moment are very keen to learn all the fine points in their particular branch. Nutria is being raised not only in the southern part but also in the northern section. Genuine chinchilla is also introduced, breeders setting at \$1,200 per pair. Muskrats were introduced to Finland some years ago and now produce 100,000 pelts valued at \$225,000. They are prohibited in Sweden. Recently the Swedish Fur Breeders Association sent their veterinary to Russia to report on the fur farms there. He visited twenty state farms. The opinion is expressed in Sweden that the Russian fox pelt does not appeal to the trade because the Russians have crossed the standard fox with some of their native foxes and the experiment has not proved a success.

Mr. W. O. Douglas was the groom and Miss Lumber the bride at a charming wedding celebrated at All Saints Anglican Church, Charlottetown, Saturday, May 15th. Both of the parties have been in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company for some years. The bride was surrendered by Mr. Ralph Parsons, Fur Trade Commissioner and the groom supported by Mr. W. E. Brown, Inspector of the Nelson River District. A delightful luncheon at the Fort Garry Hotel followed the ceremony, after which the couple left for a motor tour in Western Canada. On return Mr. Douglas will take over the management of the Hudson's Bay fur ranch at Bird's Hill, near Winnipeg. Many residents of Charlottetown will remember Mr. Douglas, who spent over a year here studying fox ranching at the McLaure and MacKinnon Silver Fox Farms, Limited. He made many sincere friends who will wish him and his bride every happiness through life.

Had a letter from A. K. Ollie, McNell, Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, with a photograph of a litter of six "freak" fox pups. Some of their faces look for all the world like a fox terrier that is marked black and white. The white markings run between the ears down over the nose, mouth and chin. Some of them are wider

than others. Their feet are white running up several inches, and I note that they have nice white tips. Ollie has a lot of these peculiarly marked foxes and is holding on to them too, because he senses a considerably increased price for the "freaks" over the regular varieties of silver fox.

HOPE RIVER SCHOOL The following is the standing of Hope River School for the month of May: Grade X—1, Frances Turner. Grade VIII—1, Joan Turner. Edith McGulgan. Grade VII—Arthur Simpson. Grade VI—Sylvia Simpson, 2. Gordon Simpson, 3. Elwood Stewart. Grade IV—1, Ethel Moore, 2. Marie Simpson and Rosa Turner, 3. Betty Fleming. Grade II—1, Mona Turner, 2. Ruth Simpson and Ada Graham, 3. Anna Graham. Grade I, a—1, Billie Cullen, 2. Helen Simpson, 3. Vaunda Ferguson. (b) 1—Bobby Fleming, 2. Edward Fleming, 3. Benson Graham, Stephen P. Connolly, Teacher.

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