THE NATIONAL BONE ARTIST.

Man Who Mounts Skeletons For the Smithsonian.

DIVISION CALLED BONE YARD.

J. W. Scollick Mounts Everything From an Elephant to a Bat—Wiring Bones Together Is Delicate Work and Gets on the Nerves—Small Skeletons Mounted Against Glass.

J. W. Scollick of the National museum in Washington is a craftsman in a trade with probably the smallest competition in the world. He is the official "bone man" of the government, or, in other words, the expert in charge of the work of cleaning, articulating and mounting skeletons at the museum, a trade by itself and one requiring infinite patience and great technical skill.

The removal of the National museum from the old to the new building has resulted in the division of skeletons being given larger quarters, and the display has been arranged so as to give it more prominence than ever. To employees of the museum and many visitors this division is known as the "bone yard."

Perhaps there is not the attraction in it for the average visitor that there is in the display of mounted animals and the big cases of ethnological groups, but it is one of the most remarkable collections in the whole museum. Mr. Scollick has been in charge of this work for years. The display in the museum is largely his work.

The exhibits range all the way from a full grown elephant to a herring. Each of them represents weeks of technical skill apparently out of all proportion to the finished result. Though there is more labor in the work, the larger skeletons are the easier to handle. The collection includes elephants, rhinoceroses, horses, gorillas, the larger monkeys, all sorts of deer, man himself and many mammals.

Wires, Springs and Braces.

Every bone in these big skeletons has to be drilled and articulated with wires, springs and metal braces. Although these do not show, it is necessary that they be put in place with mathematical precision to give the natural appearance. And then, too, everything must be scientifically just so. It is this which makes the finished work apparently so easy, but in reality so difficult.

The smaller skeletons, like lizards, small fish, bats and snakes, are not held together by wires. Their own cartilage dried in place is used to hold them together. This is one of the many reasons why a skeleton that is dried and mounted is never boiled. Not only would the boiling make the bones fall apart, but it would drive in the grease and make the bones yellow, the one thing not desired. The flesh is taken off the raw bones with a scraper and then the bones are carefully washed clean of grease with gasoline. Acids are not used at all except on rare occasions to remove a stain.

Carelessness Is Fatal.

Great care must be exercised in the drying and bleaching of the bones. This cannot be done in a hot sun, because the hot sun will crack the bones, as it will seasoning wood. From a bone artist's viewpoint the best bleaching weather is a gray, drizzling day, when there is no danger of the sun getting in its damaging work. Sometimes the bones develop black streaks, but this can usually be remedied with the use of dilute ammonia.

From beginning to end the whole skeleton cleaning process is tiresome and is said to "get on the nerves" worse than any other form of specimen mounting carried on at the museum. Weeks of cleaning are required to prepare some of the small fish skeletons, some of which have to be mounted against glass to keep them properly assembled for display. The bat skeletons, with their long, delicate wings, are also mounted in this way.

SONG AFFECTS A TRADE.

"Steamboat Bill" Increases Supply of Roustabouts.

"If 'Steamboat Bill' had not made such a hit with the negroes in all parts of the Mississippi valley we steamboat men would have been spared much trouble. As it is, so many want jobs that there are not enough places for them."

This was the observation of a New Orleans steamboat man recently. The chorus of "Steamboat Bill" runs:

Steamboat Bill, Steamboat Bill,
Steaming down the Mississippi.
Steamboat Bill, a mighty man was he,
Steamboat Bill steaming down the Mississippi,
Going to beat the record of the Robert E. Lee.

It has not been long since the steamers leaving New Orleans had the greatest difficulty in hiring roustabouts to handle the cargoes of freight. Suddenly, the mates say, they were literally besieged with applications, and they attribute the fact to the song "Steamboat Bill."

A mate on one of the river packets arriving in New Orleans said:

"The men say they want to get into the steamboat business and declare that they are indifferent as to the points on the river touched by the packets or how long they are gone."

Civil War Stories.

There is noted already a revival of the civil war fiction story, due no doubt to the fact that this year completes a half century since the beginning of that most stupendous conflict. For a generation after Appomattox the "war story" was ubiquitous. Fictionists found in the great struggle material for life sized novels, novelettes, short stories and plays. Readers of those days finally got plenty and some more of war fiction, the subject palled, and there was a demand for other sorts. Consequently the Union lieutenant hero and the fair Confederate heroine faded out of popularity.

But now there is a new generation upon the stage, and there is a demand for new civil war fiction. There is no reason to doubt that this demand will be supplied amply in the next few years. Both the streets and the woods are full of fiction writers of measurable ability, who may be depended upon to take advantage of the public thirst for thrill a la war. The American civil war was replete with incidents which need comparatively little surgical treatment at the hands of the doctors of imagination to be developed into readable stories. That war was rich in situations from which stories founded altogether upon fiction may be fabricated. Go to it, short and long story writers, and turn out some tales of true romance to offset the too persistent shop talk of the "business story" of today. Give us some war stories to make the old fellows recall the sixties and implant in the new generation a sense of respect and reverence for the heroes of those days.

But—please don't ignore this advice—ring a few changes on the Union lieutenant hero and the fair Confederate heroine. Most of the older stories of the civil war told how Lieutenant Perkins of New Hampshire fell in love with Lucille Fairfax of Virginia, who scorned him (though she loved him) until he saved her brother's life.

Poet Riley has given Indianapolis property worth $75,000 to build a library and public school administration building. If he doesn't look out he'll die poor, like Mr. Carnegie.

Hot weather reduced the price of eggs in St. Louis to 7 cents a dozen, but were they really worth eating even at that rotten figure?

Mr. Taft chooses to advance his policies by yachting trips rather than by using a knobby war club.

A man with both dollars and sense knows the value of money.

Picnics Still Popular.

A writer in a city newspaper is sad because, as he imagines, the old fashioned picnic is no more. He seems to think that modern conditions have put the picnic out of commission, that the average person of today is a little ashamed of it and declines to go on those once delightful excursions to the country when people spread their tablecloths on the grass and ate a kind of communal dinner, with the viands provided by various families—and were happy.

The writer mentioned makes a big mistake. He makes it because he lives now in a large city. If he would go back to the town he lived in when he was a boy he would discover his error and apologize for it. He would find that people still gather in a convenient grove and hold picnics, just as they did when he was a boy. The Sunday schools, the churches, the lodges and other societies still have their picnics. Each housewife prepares the basketful of food—the best on earth, including fried chicken, jelly roll cake, pies, cookies, sandwiches, and so forth. The tablecloths are spread upon the grass, the various articles of food are distributed thereupon without regard to family divisions, and everybody helps himself to whatever he likes.

Of course there is something different from the picnic of 1880. Instead of walking to the picnic grove or driving in the buggy, spring wagon or family "hack" of thirty years ago, many people go nowadays by trolley or by automobile. Many others still use the old time conveyances, however. There is just as much fun in the present day picnic as there was a generation ago. There may be—no doubt there is—a greater proportion of canned foods in the communistic "feed," but that is because canned foods have become possible and popular since you were a "kid." Human nature remains the same, and men, women and children still enjoy a picnic near to nature's heart.

It is announced that plans have been drawn for a hundred story building in New York, to be 1,200 feet high. Communication with the moon will be possible shortly by simply taking the elevator.

It is disappointing to learn that heat baffled Aviator Atwood. We had thought flying was a particularly choice way to keep cool.

In or out of office, Dr. Wiley is likely to keep gouging food and drug adulterators. He's got the habit.

Swat the Fly.

Wife, let your slogan be,
"Swat the fly!"
Hubby, do the same as she—
Swat the fly.
Kiddies, like your parents act,
Lest with switches you be whacked
For your woeful lack of tact—
Swat the fly!

The common housefly, it has been discovered, is one of the most perilous pests to which civilized man is subjected. The fly is not merely a nuisance; it is a distributer of disease germs and thereby a slayer of mankind. Flies alight in and walk through all kinds of filth, which adheres to their feet and legs. They carry it away and deposit it upon food, both the raw and exposed materials and the cooked product placed upon the table. They deposit the filth wherever they alight—upon the human body or elsewhere. The fly, therefore, is not only disgusting; it is distinctly dangerous.

The crusade which has for its slogan "Swat the fly!" is growing in force. The latest phase of the anti-fly campaign carries the fight into the enemy's country and makes it aggressive as well as defensive. A New York physician urges the fly swatting operation to go on outside the house as well as indoors. He proposes public fly traps at every street corner to catch the pests. It is this doctor's hope that city and town authorities may take up the matter officially and make the swatting of the fly a municipal as well as a household matter.

Indications are that in a few years the swatters will become almost as active as the flies and that Mr. and Mrs. Housefly and their myriad progeny will be reduced to a comparatively small family. This is a consummation most devoutly to be wished. Swat the fly!

Aviator Atwood started from Boston June 30 and reached Washington July 11 by aeroplane. The distance is 568 miles. Of course it was a great achievement—as an aeroplane voyage—but if you're in a hurry and want to go from Boston to Washington you'll save time by taking a railroad train.

Just about a year from now Blank and Blank will be nominees for president on the Republican ticket, opposed by Blank and Blank on the Democratic ticket. Blank and Blank will be elected too.

The express purpose of Congressman Victor Murdock seems to be to go after the goat of the express companies.

One way not to worry about mosquitoes is to think of something else while they bite you.

Man Is a Social Animal.

Nearly half the people in the United States live in incorporated towns or cities of 2,500 or more inhabitants, according to the latest census statistics. The returns for 1910 show that when the census was taken 46.3 per cent of the population was urban and 53.7 per cent rural, the latter classification including those who live on farms or in towns of less than 2,500 people. From 1900 to 1910 the percentage of urbanites increased from 40.5 to 46.3, and twenty years ago only 36.1 of the total population was classed as urban.

These figures show that in spite of the opening of millions of acres of new agricultural lands the city population is increasing faster than the country population. This is also despite the fact that in the past twenty years the telephone, the trolley and the rural mail delivery system have been extended to the farms in thousands of communities. These improvements, it would seem, should make farm life more attractive and turn the tide of population from city to country. The reverse being the case, what are the causes for such an apparently anomalous situation? A satisfactory reply to this question would go deep into the domain of sociology, but a few surface explanations may be offered.

In the first place, while there are more farms there are also more cities and towns than there were twenty years ago. For instance, Oklahoma City in 1890 was a mere village a few months old. Now it is a thriving city of about 75,000 people. In Oklahoma and other western and southwestern states are many cities and towns which were not on the map a score of years ago. Wherever new agricultural regions are populated new towns must spring up, and this accounts in part for the increase of urban population But the older cities and towns also show unusual growth for the most part; hence the problem is reduced to the final analysis by recognition of the fact that man is a social animal and likes to live close to neighbors.

Considering the large number of persons who claim to be Mayflower descendants, it seems not unlikely that some of them are merely distant relatives of persons who have ridden on the president's yacht, the Mayflower.

Mr. McCreary alternates between the governorship of Kentucky and the United States senate. Now somebody has nominated him for vice president.

Has any one sighed lately for an old fashioned hot summer?

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"The Cinch of the Century."

Congressman Victor Murdock of Kansas, who has a habit of saying what he means, has characterized the business privileges of the express companies as "the cinch of the century." He calls attention to the general investigation of the express business ordered recently by the interstate commerce commission and says that it will open up an interesting dark chamber in the modern business world. The express companies have filed a schedule of lower rates to take effect Aug. 1. Mr. Murdock remarks that this shows that they already are running to cover.

"For many years," says an editorial writer in the Pittsburg Press, "the parcels delivery at the hands of the express companies has been a means of systematized plundering. It is estimated that they collect yearly not less than $50,000,000 over and above a fair remuneration for the service rendered. The postal department has ready to hand in the free rural delivery system the instrumentality for taking over the express business."

There is evident on every hand a disposition to do something toward giving the public a more equitable express service. In some of the European countries eleven pound packages are carried by post at eight cent rates. This is said to be highly remunerative to the government.

It is believed by some persons of authority who have studied the problem that the extension of the parcels post to cover packages up to a certain weight and size at a rate found profitable in other countries will so enlarge the postal revenue as to give us a one cent letter rate.

It is not conducive to good humor to consider the fact that the express companies, by their exorbitant rates and the powerful lobby they have maintained at Washington in order to retain their monopoly of the business, have kept all of us paying a double letter postage. But that is only one of the grievances which the American public has against the express trust.

"Dead In Auto Crash" is becoming altogether too frequent as a newspaper headline. Automobile drivers should be at least as careful as engine drivers.

Speaking of straw hats, an eastern firm advertises the hakhak and the lallapaloosa as specialties.

Until we have an official national flower perhaps the Mayflower will have to do.

Odds are 1,000 to 1 that if there is racing there is betting.

Co-operative Forest Fire Protection.

Under the terms of the Weeks law passed by congress last winter several states have entered into co-operative agreements with the United States department of agriculture providing for the expenditure by the government of a sum not exceeding $10,000 in any one state during next year toward meeting the expenses of forest fire protection. Among the states first to take advantage of this new law are Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey and Wisconsin. Each state agrees to expend in this work an amount equaling that contributed by the national government.

The state authorities are required to submit a definite plan showing in detail exactly what it is proposed to do. There is to be an organized and effective system of administration by state officers. The funds of the federal government will be used solely for paying patrolmen, who are to be selected by the state officials, subject to the approval of the department of agriculture.

The basic idea is that efficient fire protection can be given only by the development of a carefully worked out, well manned and capably officered scheme, which studies the situation beforehand and makes provision for the most effective disposal and use of the available forces, with a view both to preventing fires from getting started and concentrating upon them quickly if they do get started.

Indications are that the states generally will take advantage of this governmental proposition. In that event it is highly probable that the annual losses from forest fires will be reduced to a minimum.

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