Terrible Locust May Affect Starving Europeans

Swarms That Darken the Sun and Stop Railroad Trains—The Argentine Government Spending Millions for Defense—Something About the Condor and Other Vultures—The Carancho and the Kea—The South American Ostrich—A Giant Rooster That Hatches the Eggs and Takes Care of the Young.

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BUENOS AIRES, Argentina.

I HAVE spent this week with some of our scientists who have come to Argentina to aid in improving the farming conditions. There are a dozen or more of these men, connected with the Department of Agriculture, and they represent every branch of farm efficiency work. Last year we had Dr. Willett M. Hays, formerly assistant secretary of agriculture of the United States. He came here at a salary of $1,000 a month as consulting adviser to the agricultural department of Argentina. During his stay he introduced many new methods for improving the organization and efficiency of the department. Mr. Walter G. Davis, the head of the national weather bureau, has organized a service which is superior to any other on the South American continent. He has been in Argentina for more than forty years, and was brought down to be one of the officials at the University of Cordova. Mr. H. M. Curran, who for several years was connected with our forestry bureau in the Philippines, is studying the timber resources of the Parana basin and giving suggestions as to the organization of a lumber industry. Laurel Duval of Ohio has charge of the standardization of grain, and Walter Fisher of the same state is at the head of the experimental stations engaged in fruit culture in Patagonia. His work is chiefly along the Rio Negro. We have also experts who are organizing a soil survey and some who are investigating the insect pests. One of the latter is Mr. George R. Smith of Colorado, who has just returned from an extensive tour through the wilds of the north, where he has been studying the locust. Mr. Smith is at the head of the entomological bureau of the department, and he knows much about this pestiferous grasshopper that eats up the crops.

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The locust may raise the price of wheat to the armies in Europe, and it may bring starvation to thousands. It is the terror of the Argentine farmer. It afflicts him, even as it afflicted Pharoah at the command of Moses when he hardened his heart and would not let the Israelites go. The chief difference is that Pharaoh had the locust for only a season, while the Argentines often have it year after year in succession. The locusts that spread over Egypt sailed in on an east wind. Those that cover Argentina fly down from the north, and, like their sisters of Egypt, they come in such swarms that they cover the face of the sun and darkness falls on the land. They eat every herb, and when they depart "there remains not any green thing in the trees or in the herbs of the field" throughout all the land that they cover. Said the entomological expert, Mr. Smith, in talking with me:

"The Bible description of the plague is not overdrawn. With the exception of the paradise tree, the locusts destroy every green thing. They eat the crops from the fields and chew up the grass. They clean the fruit trees of their leaves, and eat off the bark to the wood. I have passed through orchards where the oranges were still hanging on the branches, although not a leaf was to be seen. The locusts will go into a cornfield and strip the leaves from the stalks, and if the corn is small they may eat it down to the ground. I have traveled through miles of such fields, and through orchards where the locusts have hung to the branches like bees when swarming, the branches often breaking with the weight of the locusts."

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During a tour up the Rio de la Plata river I saw fields devastated by locusts, and traveled with Dr. Habenicht, who is connected with a colony of Seventh-day Adventists from the United States. That colony is located in the province of Entre Rios, in a region that has frequent invasions of locusts. Said Dr. Habenicht:

"The hoppers frequently strip large trees of their bark, leaving nothing but the white skeletons standing. Where they attack the ripe fruit you may see the peach stones still hanging and the bark of the tree completely taken away. They clean the grass from the ground, and cut the wheat in the fields so that the earth looks as though it were burnt. At times they cover the ground to a depth of two or three inches, hopping one over the other in their return to the north. There will be millions and millions of these hopping locusts, and when they fly they darken the sun.

"The size of the locust swarms varies," said Dr. Smith. "Sometimes they may cover but a few acres, and at others they may shade the land for many square miles. I recently passed through a locust swarm on a railroad train. For more than an hour we rode through a cloud of locusts which extended far out on both sides of the car. It was almost two hundred feet high. The locusts were not in one solid mass and as they flew they looked like a snowstorm, their transparent wings catching the sun, and having the appearance of snowflakes. After a time we passed out of that swarm and into another. The latter was thick, for the locusts were about to settle down for the night. They usually stop overnight. This last swarm was about two thousand feet wide, fifty feet high and a mile long. When I saw it in the distance it was so black that I thought a storm was coming, and I asked the porter about the cloud. He replied that the cloud was the "langosto," or locust.

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A little later our cars dashed into the swarm and I found he knew what he was talking about. The locusts were flying high enough not to affect the movement of the train, and we went right through them. This is not always possible. When they fly near the ground they sometimes cover the track and the cars crush them, making the rails so greasy that the wheels will not catch. They just fly around and around while the cars stand still. In such cases two of the brakemen often sit on the cowcatcher, holding brooms on the rails, to brush off the locusts as the cars move. Sometimes they sand the rails to make the train go. The swarm of which I spoke so dimmed the light that we seemed to be traveling under a tent and not in the open."

I asked Mr. Smith to give me some word pictures of the locusts in action. He replied:

"They are very much like our grasshoppers, but are about twice as large. Their general color is gray and they look like small birds as they fly through the air. They are not dangerous, but when they fly low and hit you in the face it is annoying. The locusts are prolific and a great part of the damage is caused not by the grown-ups but by the babies. As they move over the country the females bore holes in the ground with their tails and lay eggs there. Each female will lay a bag of from fifty to a hundred eggs and a month or so later these will have hatched out into young locusts who crawl out and begin their devastating march. Their parents have already eaten up the most of the crop and the babies eat what has grown up in the meantime. They crawl and hop over the ground, consuming everything as they go. They keep on crawling until their wings grow. They go in great hordes, climbing fences and entering the houses. Dr. Habenicht told me that they ate the lace curtains from his windows, and that they sometimes attack the babies and bite them until the blood runs from the little one's ears. As soon as their wings grow they fly away."

"Where do the locusts come from?" I asked Mr. Smith.

"No one knows. Some say they are from Brazil, some from Bolivia, some from Paraguay and the Argentine Chaco. We only know that they come from the north and northwest. They come in August and September. They get as far south as the provinces of Salta and Jujui and the territories of Formosa and Chaco, and from there they spread over the republic. After a time there are other swarms formed by the young hatched from eggs left by the first swarms, and as the weather grows warmer there are still other swarms until the whole territory is overrun. It seems to me that the only way to combat the locusts is by going to the country of their origin and studying their life history there. Scientists should investigate the biological history of the insect in Bolivia and Brazil, and seek to find some means of prevention. As it is we are fighting them as best we can, but we are working in the dark."

"What means are used to combat the pest?"

"We have long had laws for the extermination of locusts, and the government is now spending from one to five million dollars a year in fighting them. We attack them in the swarms and in the egg, and when traveling as young over the country. The fliers are caught in bags and cloths during the hours of low temperature and destroyed. The places where they settle are fired, and where they have laid their eggs the whole zone is often plowed up. In other places the eggs are dug up with picks, and if the ground is wet animals are driven over the soil to destroy them. At times they are gathered in sacks, and it is not uncommon to have 500 wagon loads of sacked locusts brought to one of the receiving stations in a single day. In some places the government pays 15 or 20 cents a sack, and a man may make $15 a night catching locusts. The sacking is usually during the mating season, when they do not fly."

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Another method of protecting the grain fields is to surround them with little fences of tin or sheet iron. These fences may be eighteen inches or two feet in height, but it is impossible for the young locusts to crawl over them. They will come in hordes to the fence and then travel along it in both directions. At every 300 feet holes about a yard deep are dug, and these are so bordered with tin that the locusts drop into the holes and cannot get out. The agricultural department has spent millions of dollars for such means of defense, and it has now on hand enough of such barriers to reach half-way around the world. There are also other locust traps. In places the crawlers are scooped up with scrapers and killed, and attempts have been made to destroy them with solutions of kerosene, arsenic and creosote.

Another insect pest of Argentina is the ant. There is one species that is not much bigger than the head of a large pin, but it exists in such numbers that the damage is enormous. It attacks the sugar cane and cotton. It bites its way into the oranges and it crawls into the houses. It likes to work in the dark and no place is safe from it. In some sections the bedposts rest in bowls of water or on panes of glass coated with vaseline to keep the ants out, and I am told that it is sometimes necessary to take the babies from their cradles and dip them in water to clean off the ants. The little insects are so small that they get into their mouths and nostrils, and there are reports of babies that have been killed by them. The Argentine ant has caused trouble in the United States. These ants have been carried by ships to our gulf coast, and for a time there were so many in New Orleans that they became known as the New Orleans ant. They are also found in Southern California.

The animal life of Argentina does not compare in variety with that of the United States. The greater part of the country is treeless, and there are but few wild birds and wild beasts in comparison with some other parts of the world. I have seen condors in the Andes. They are the highest birds that fly and their favorite breeding places are two or three miles above the sea. They may often be seen among the snows and are also on exhibition in the zoological gardens of some of the South American capitals. I photographed a half dozen in the zoo at Lima, Peru, and it seemed to me they were about the ugliest birds in the whole aviary. Their heads and necks had no feathers, and they looked like the gigantic vultures that they are. The male condors have combs of bright red, and there is a frill of white feathers at the base of their long, skinny necks. The rest of the plumage is black. These birds are sometimes compared with the eagle, but they are nothing like eagles in appearance and habits. They eat carrion, and if a llama or an alpaca lies dead in the mountains you may see them swooping down upon the carcass. They will attack any of the animals of the high Andes, especially if it is sick or wounded; and the shepherds have to watch to keep them away from the sheep. When they find a carcass they gorge themselves, and it is when they are stupid from overeating that they are easily caught and killed.

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The condor is not seen on the pampas, although there are many vultures of other kinds there and in other parts of Argentina. The carancho makes one think of a cross between a vulture and a hawk. It is a comparatively small bird of a dark-brown color with a light band across its wings. The carancho is one of the pests of the pastoral districts. It not only eats carrion, but it will attack the lambs and pick out their eyes. It makes me think of the kea, the famous sheep-eating parrot of New Zealand, which has a way of fastening its claws into the wool of a live sheep and then tearing a hole into its side to get at the kidneys. The kea instinctively knows just where the kidneys are located, and the hole which it cuts is as smooth as though it were done with a knife. The bird tears out the kidneys and fat and then leaves the sheep to die. At times the government has offered a reward of 75 cents a head for dead keas and as many as 75,000 have been killed in one year.

About the most interesting of the large birds of Argentina is the rhea, or the South American ostrich. They are found in great numbers running over the pampas and there are thousands of them in Patagonia. I have seen them from the car windows and have watched them hunted in the desert, where they squat down and hide their heads in the sand. They are then of the same gray color as the bushes and bunches of scrub all around them and it takes a good eye to distinguish the birds from the bush. The ostrich has always been laughed at for this silly custom, but, indeed, there is nothing more cunning and it forms a means of concealment that the bird could have in no other way. When the rhea stands up you can easily distinguish him, but when he squats down, with his head out of sight, he is merely a bush to the hunter.

In walking the ostrich keeps its wings closed and swings its neck backward and forward. In running it raises its wings and shows its bare thighs as it speeds along over the ground, skimming the air. When it charges, its wings are outspread, and the head and neck are held down. It can frighten a horse and when angry will attack a man upon horseback. The American ostrich has three toes, while the African has two. Its foot is large and powerful.

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The American ostrich is smaller than the African and its feathers do not compare with the latter, although they are gathered and sold. I have seen some made into rugs. They are also used for fly brushes and feather dusters. The plumes of the male birds are sometimes combined with the African feathers for hats and bonnets. The feathers are of a different color, according to the parts of the body. Some are of a rich brown and some black, but most are gray or a dirty white.

The ostriches of Patagonia and the pampas move about in flocks, each consisting of a cock and a number of hens. Each cock has its own hens, and it will fight to the death any other cock that comes near them. The cock bosses the hens. He is a sort of a sultan and they seem to be the ladies of the harem, who do his bidding. They lay their eggs in one nest, each hen giving her share until fifty eggs may be there in one hole in the sand. When this is complete the cock takes charge of the eggs, and sets on them, spelled now and then by a hen, as his lordship directs. He has to keep setting for five or six weeks before the chicks hatch.

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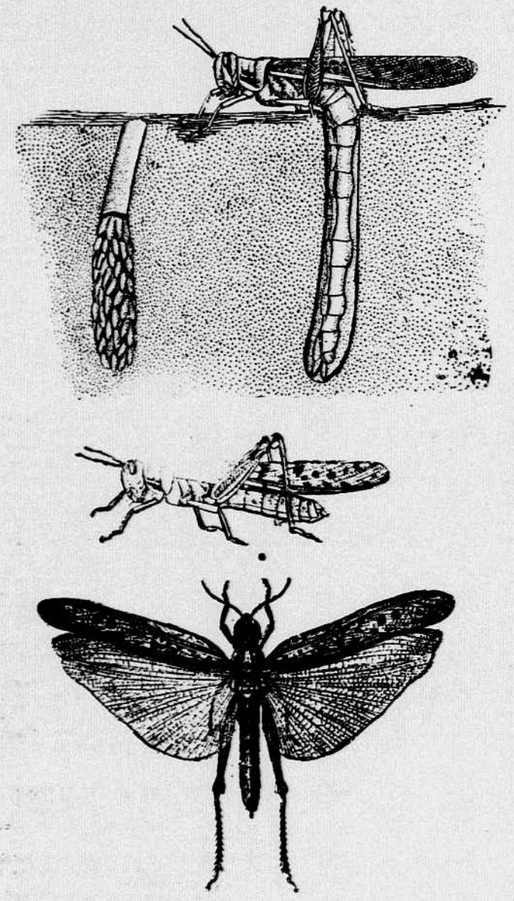
Some of the ostrich eggs weigh a pound and a half, and it is not uncommon to have one served as an omelette when you stop over night in camp. The cock objects to having any one touch the eggs, and if they are disturbed he will leave that nest and start another.

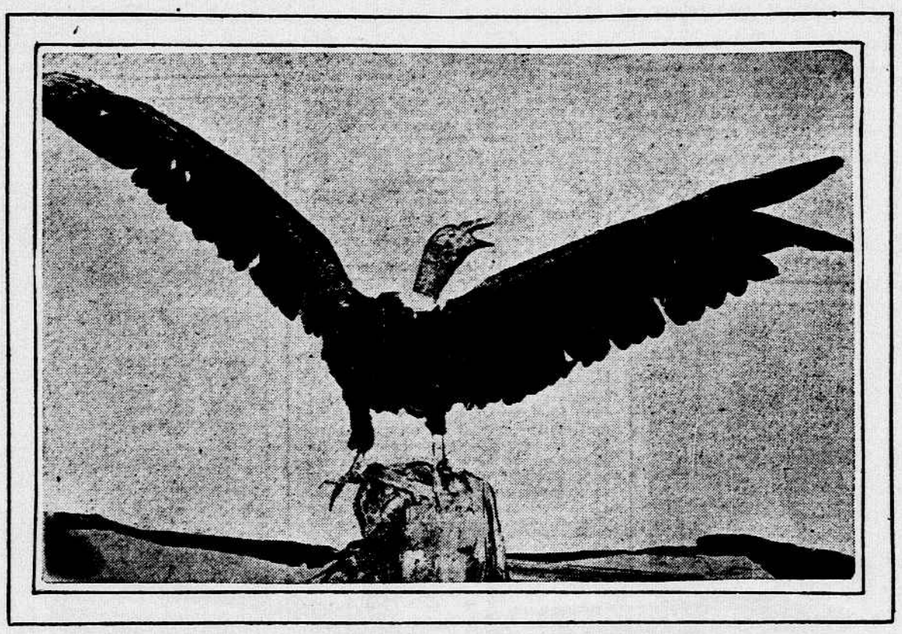
I have heard a number of queer stories about how the cock raises his young. One of them relates to the first meal, and tells how this is gathered through an egg that is placed on the sand separate and apart from the setting and several yards from the nest. The egg remains in the sun until the ostrich chicks come, by which time it is rotten. When the little chicks appear, the father goes to the egg and breaks it. It gives forth a horrible smell, that attracts the flies for miles around. The little ones eat the flies, and thus have their first meal. The story is interesting and I trust it is true.

It is the father that takes care of the young ostrich brood. He calls them to him with a peculiar booming sound and the babies reply with a chirp. He keeps track of them, and is almost crazy if they are disturbed. At such times he will charge a dog or a man upon horseback, and if he can knock down his enemy he will kick and bite him. His kick is terrible, and it is sometimes strong enough to kill a dog or a man. Of late some of the estancieros have been introducing the African ostrich. It thrives.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.



ARGENTINE LOCUST, WHICH DESTROYS THE WHEAT CROP; EACH LOCUST LAYS FROM FIFTY TO ONE HUNDRED EGGS.



THE CONDOR OF ARGENTINA IS LIKE A GIGANTIC VULTURE.

THE RHEA, OR SOUTH AMERICAN OSTRICH.

Mrs. George Thacher Guernsey a Candidate for High D. A. R. Office on an Original Platform

State Regent of Kansas for the Past Six Years May Succeed Mrs. William Cumming Story as President General—Her Decidedly Original Platform Contains Eight Planks, and She Also Publishes a Pamphlet Explaining Just What She Expects Her Principles to Accomplish if She Is Elected to Office—Election to Take Place April 19—Mrs. Guernsey Applies Practical Business Ideas to All Her Problems.

THE west is clamoring vigorously for recognition through the highest office within the gift of the Daughters of the American Revolution—that of president general. And its candidate is Mrs. George Thacher Guernsey, state regent of Kansas for the past six years, to succeed Mrs. William Cumming Story, either this term or next, as fates and votes decree at the approaching annual congress and biennial election of national officers April 19 next.

Indiana, Illinois and New York have each twice sent favored Daughters to preside over this great body of women, and now the west, it is said, stands solidly back of the Kansas candidate, indorsing her personally and her decidedly original platform, with its eight distinct planks. It reads:

1. Elimination of all party lines. 2. One term of three years, with no re-election, for all national officers, in order to prevent the distractions consequent upon a campaign for a second term. 3. All elected officers to have complete and unhampered control of their own offices, and to be held responsible by congress for the proper conduct of the same. 4. No mileage for officers or committee chairmen. 5. Regular board meetings to be held four times a year. 6. A committee of appeals to be selected by congress for the adjustment of otherwise unsettled differences in state or chapters, whose decisions shall be final. 7. Magazine to be restored to publication by a responsible firm. 8. A "fair and square" deal for every Daughter.

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The issuance of the platform was itself an innovation sufficiently striking to focus national attention upon Mrs. Guernsey. In fact, so much interest has been manifested in it that Mrs. Guernsey has prepared and sent out a small pamphlet explaining in detail just what she hopes to accomplish through the application of these principles should she be elected. She has called this "For You to Consider."

As the date for the opening of the congress approaches all eyes in the vast membership of this powerful and rapidly growing association are turned inquiringly toward the woman whose supporters have challenged the time-honored custom of permitting each head of this society a second term out of courtesy or from regard to precedent.

Patriotic ancestry and the personal popularity which she had to possess to become a leader are not the only claims that entitle Mrs. Guernsey to distinction. She could step out in the business world and earn her living in several lines of work besides that of school teacher, which she made her first vocation, at the age of sixteen, in the town of Independence, Kan., where she still resides.

So successful was she in this career that in a few years she was made principal of the high school and later on president of the school board. As a teacher she was noted for the ease with which she maintained discipline and at the same time kept the regard of her pupils.

With her marriage, to a young bank clerk Mrs. Guernsey did not let domesticity absorb all of her activities, for she began at once to master the principles of the banking business, keeping step with her husband and assisting him all she could. It is said that she could establish and run a bank.

Mrs. Guernsey applies her practical business ideas to all of her problems. In her philanthropic work she takes no information second hand, sparing no pains to discover the merits of all cases that come to her attention. She has no preferred line of charity; all want and distress receive equal interest. Having been a wage-earner herself, she is able to understand the wants and needs of the suppliants that come to her, and, though sympathetic and tender toward all distress and suffering, she is opposed to indiscriminate giving. She says:

"The truest and best way to help people is to help them to help themselves. Put them in the way of regaining and keeping their self-respect and you will make good citizens out of them instead of grafters and parasites to become a menace and charge to a community. All normal people have the instincts of independence, and though these may be smothered through the stress of adverse circumstances, they soon reassert themselves and provide the best impetus toward rehabilitation. Of course, the really abnormal must be looked after according to their limitations."

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Mrs. Guernsey's private charity is said to be enormous. Of that she never speaks, but she follows the same principle as in her civic welfare work and personally looks into every case. She considers it a matter of course that she should do everything in her power to use her money and position for the alleviation of distress, and she likewise considers it a matter of course that she should support prohibition and the progress of the woman suffrage movement. Regarding her civic work, she says:

"The women of Kansas are enfranchised, the ballot is no longer a novelty to them and that they should stand shoulder to shoulder with their husbands in all lines of work is but natural, an inheritance from the pioneer settlers to whose united work as men and women the existence and splendid development of our state is due."

If Mrs. Guernsey has a hobby, it is patriotism. America comes first, last and always, and the "made in America" movement has had an earnest advocate in her for many years. American history, music, literature, art, drama, manufactures and even American scenery come before all others in her consideration.

Years ago she began collecting the works of American writers upon every subject, principally history and dramatists, the lives and memoirs of histrionic characters. Besides this extensive Americana collection, she also has a collection of American composers.

Mrs. Guernsey declares that her love of American history and her reverence for the old pioneers and patriots, and her excessive pride in the institutions of this country, is but the result of her childhood training in a home where patriotism ranked next to religion.

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Now, a confirmed traveler who has ceased to number her trips to Europe and other lands, it is her boast that before she ever went abroad to travel she had visited every point of interest and historic spot in every state in her own land, beginning, most naturally, with the places associated with the lives and exploits of her own ancestors. "Ibsen" is one of her favorites, and her discourses upon his plays show a depth of understanding that bespeaks the close student. In music she has her greatest opportunity to indulge this taste. Mr. and Mrs. Guernsey come east regularly each season to spend several weeks in Boston and New York to hear the wonderful music for which these cities are famous.

Before the Carnegie library plan had included Kansas in its chain Mrs. Guernsey was president of the Ladies' Library Society, which formed the public library of Independence. She is still filling her original duty of selecting all the new books for it, though it is now one of the Carnegie institutions.

Excepting the summers spent in foreign travel each year since 1887, this energetic woman has occupied her cottage at Chautauqua. For ten years she has been president of her class, 1891, of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, and the prosperous status of the D. A. R. Chautauqua Circle is said to be due to her influence and efforts while its president.

Starting her married life as her husband's comrade and partner in all that interested him, she is and has always been a keen student both of politics and civic affairs. Last year during election time in Kansas, Mrs. Guernsey was in North Carolina, and knowing her lively interest Mr. Guernsey kept her posted by telegraph as to how things were going in the home state.

Though progressive, Mrs. Guernsey is a housekeeper and home maker of the old-fashioned capable type, such as the pioneer mothers of large families and moderate means were obliged to make of their girls, and she cherishes great pride in her parentage, claiming patriotic ancestry in three states. One of the great pleasures that she has been able to experience since fortune has smiled upon them and her two children grown up has been the gathering of family data and visiting historic places associated with her forbears on both sides.

She was Sarah Elizabeth Mitchell, daughter of Daniel P. Mitchell and Eliza Baker Mitchell. Her father was a grandson of Rev. John Mitchell, whose tombstone in old Harmony churchyard, Lewis county, Va., bears his record. Rev. John Mitchell was born in England in May, 1763, and came to America in 1775 and to Virginia a year later. With the outbreak of the war he enlisted as a private in 1776 in Capt. William Blackwell's company, the 11th Virginia Regiment, which was commanded at various times by Col. Daniel Morgan, Lieut. Col. George Nicholas, Capt. Charles Porterfield, Maj. Thomas Sneed and Lieut. Col. John Cropper during the revolutionary war and served three years. He preached the gospel for forty years and died in 1840.

Rev. Daniel Mitchell took his family from Salem, Ohio, where Mrs. Guernsey was born, to Kansas to organize Methodism through that part of the prairie land. He was beloved by his followers, and at his death this pioneer preacher was one of the foremost men of the state.

On her mother's side, also, Mrs. Guernsey is descended from a long line of clergymen of the Lutheran faith. One of her ancestors, Gerhard Henkel, came to America in 1717 as one of the founders of the Lutheran Church in the new country. He settled in Pennsylvania and became pastor of the church at Faulkner's swamp, the oldest existing Lutheran church in the United States.

MRS. GEORGE THACHER GUERNSEY.
(Photo by Edmonston.)

BIG SHOW OF CACTUS PLANTS IN WASHINGTON

ALONG the north side of the grounds of the Department of Agriculture between 13th and 14th streets are a number of glass houses set in a row, all of them invitingly warm when biting winds blow and glitteringly hot when the summer sun glows. Sometimes the place has been called "glasshouse lane." In these houses grow many curious creatures or creations of the vegetable kingdom, and there is one house in which the specimens seem especially to attract tourists, and which are of particular interest to scientists of a particular sort.

It is the cactus house, or perhaps it should be written the cacti house. It is a strange place. It seems to be a bit of a strange world plucked out of a remote somewhere and set down among the marble mountains, green fields and deep, majestic rivers of the capital. It is a collections of bits of many strange worlds plucked in many remote, wild and desert places and brought together in a living museum of plant wonders.

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There are something more than five thousand specimens which have been taken by botanical explorers and even non-botanical explorers in all the lands of the world where cactus grows, but the specimens are especially numerous from the cactus lands of North and South America. There is no patch of American desert which has not sent its representative to this cactus congress. It is said by persons who have the authority to speak on the subject of cacti that nowhere else in the world is there a cactus collection which so nearly approaches completeness. Many extremely rare specimens are growing in that glass house in the grounds of the Department of Agriculture which are not to be seen in the cactus collections in the botanical gardens of Europe. The plants range in size from the cacti called Lophophora, which furnish desert Indians with the little mescal buttons which many of the tribes use in religious rites, up to plants as large as trees.

There are small plants which, whatever their botanic name, are popularly and appropriately called "living stone," in that they live and grow, yet to the human touch seem nearly of the hardness of stone. A boot heel struck upon one of these small plants would not make an impression. There are immense cacti with fleshy lobes as big as a strong man's arms and legs, and which are spineless. It is said that the earliest specimens were found in Algeria and that out of them was obtained that spineless cactus with which the name of Burbank is associated, and which has become a valuable forage plant for cattle, growing where no other forage plant would grow.

There are cacti with great long arms that wind around stakes and poles and climb trellises, and looking for all the world like thorny vines or some uncanny, monstrous serpent. There are barrel cacti, a cactus that grows in the form and the size of a barrel, and cacti which from their forms are called "bishop's miter" and "Turk's head."

At times the cactus house is gay with the flowers of the cactus, and many of the blossoms are gorgeous in coloring and otherwise beautiful. Close by cacti that are giants you may see beds of baby cacti, plants in all the stages of infancy and youth being raised from seed.

A number of years ago the Smithsonian Institution, as one of its manifold lines of investigation, took up the subject of the cactus and began gathering representatives of all obtainable varieties. The herbarium specimens were not so satisfactory as the growing specimens and a large number of these were brought to Washington. The difficulty of keeping these growing plants under scientific observation with the limited resources for this kind of work at the disposal of the Smithsonian led the Department of Agriculture to assign a special greenhouse and a special cactus gardener and student to the collection, which has been greatly increased and is being steadily enlarged both through the agency of the Smithsonian and the Department of Agriculture.

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Not far away from the cacti grow many, many specimens of another plant on which southern and eastern farmers found high hopes, on which fortunes have been made in other parts of the United States, and which is one of the historic and interesting plants of the world—a plant which set out on a conquest of the world with the Persians when they undertook the subjugation of Greece. The plant, it is said, was carried along by the Persians, it being the custom for the advance parties of a great host to plant fields for the sustenance of the herds of cattle and horses which helped support invading armies. This strange plant is alfalfa, an Arabic word which is said to stand for "best fodder."

From Greece alfalfa migrated to Italy, and the classic Roman knew its value well. From Italy alfalfa traveled to Spain, by the Spaniard was taken to Mexico in the early years of the sixteenth century, and from Mexico it spread through South America and was growing in California when the first of the people of the United States saw that land.

Alfalfa historians have given it as their opinion that this plant was a native of Media or that part of the world which was the home of the Medes, for probably the plant was in that territory long before there were such men as Medes and Persians. The department by cross-breeding is engaged in the important work of strengthening and improving old varieties of alfalfa and developing new and more valuable varieties. There are a few alfalfa farms along the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers and one now and then sees a field of alfalfa in Prince Georges and Montgomery counties, Md., while in western Maryland and in northwestern Virginia alfalfa fields have come to be a fairly common sight.

The Firlinfoens.

AT Brianza, in Lombardy, there flourishes a very curious sort of band, all the members of which play the same kind of instrument, known as the "firlinfoens." This corresponds to what we know as "panpipes" and is constructed of reeds fastened side by side, the bass pipes being often several feet long, while the others gradually decrease in size.

The "firlinfoens," as the players are called, after their instruments, are as a rule ignorant of music and they learn their tunes by ear, often from a phonograph. It is said that the panpipe players experience all the sensations of intoxication after a march due to the energetic blowing and the constant wagging of the head to and fro. The music, although conveying to the stranger at first a most curious effect, is said to be not unpleasant.