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AGAINST THE DESTRUCTION OF

White Herons AND Red Ibises

ON THE LOWER AMAZON,
ESPECIALLY ON THE ISLAND OF MARAJÓ.

Two memorials presented in 1895 and 1896 to His
Excellency, the Governor of the State of Pará and
the Legislature

BY

Prof. Dr. Emil A. Goeldi, C. M. Z. S.,

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History and Ethnography. Author of "As Aves do Brazil" (2 vol. Rio de Janeiro,
1894-1900) and "Album de Aves Amazonicas," (Zurich 1900.)

Translated from the Portuguese into English by

Mr. Wm. H. Clifford.

Pará (Brazil)
1902.

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White Herons and Red Ibises

ON THE LOWER PART
OF THE PENINSULA OF FLORIDA

BY
J. R. MILLER

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TO HIS EXCELLENCY, THE GOVERNOR:

By reason of my double capacity as Naturalist, completely devoted to the study of Brazilian natural history, as is already evidenced by numerous works that are known within and without the country, and as Superintendent of the Pará Museum of Natural History and Ethnography, (a position I was disinclined to take simply in the express terms stipulated in the regulations of the Museum,) I feel impelled to call most respectfully your attention to the scandalous abuse that exists in the Island of Marajó, in the destruction of Herons, and to beg Your Excellency, as the chief magistrate of this promising state, to take the initiative, to the end that Congress may not again let a legislative session pass by, without ordering in the most positive terms the abolition of the vile business referred to, and without providing for the efficacious protection within the territory of the State of Pará of a family of birds, that, up to the present time, are brutally persecuted, and yet form one of the most fascinating ornaments of nature on the majestic river which we all love.

Can there be, perchance, a more beautiful creature than one of those adult herons, adorned with its nuptial veil of dazzling whiteness? Can there be a scene of nature, a landscape more picturesque, than the margin of one of our interior lakes that is solemnly guarded by an interminable file of those white forms, which, on our approach, dissolves into a cloud of snow, carried at times in a spiral, as if driven by a strong blast of wind? And it is this ornament of creation that stands in jeopardy; and the ever widening openings in those ranks, formerly unbroken, excite the wrath and indignation of every friend of nature, of every man who is endowed with spirit and feeling.

The pen almost refuses to write out the accusation of such an enormity! And, meanwhile, it exists, and brazenfacedly shows itself, in the open daylight, desiring to assume in our market the appearance of a business as legitimate as any other; there are men who do not hesitate to instigate the people in the interior to

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slaughter hecatombs of these superb creatures, to pluck out a few paltry feathers, of which it is necessary to get thousands in order to weigh a single kilogramme of the horrible merchandise.

There are men, who, every year, order a wholesale slaughter of both sexes, both old and young, without distinction, leaving the carcasses to rot on the spot. And, not satisfied, with this, they invade the nesting-places, and saturate the ground with the blood of the parent birds, as parental love renders them more approachable at this period; and then the embryo inside the egg dies miserably, owing to the lack of the mother bird's warmth, and the young, already hatched out, are given over to certain death by starvation.

The crime that is here perpetrated is taking on gigantic proportions; it is wild destruction; it is the climax of vandalism! Let the Government heed my warning. The evident killing off of herons most certainly leads not only to the direct destruction, but also, even in a higher degree, to the easily explained panic of the survivors,—the very natural terror which must seize upon these birds in the districts where this carnage is habitually perpetrated.

And there is yet another consideration that I judge fitting to submit to the attention of the Government, which in a singular way comes to strengthen my accusation in the gravity of the offense; it is more than probable that the Island of Marajó, since a very early period, has been the favorite breeding ground of the herons, and so they have come from distant points of the Lower and Upper Amazon to that common meeting point, which is so especially adapted for the incubation of their young, and has been instinctively sought, due to the ingrained remembrance from a habit that has been repeated for innumerable generations. In other words: the remembrance of the Island of Marajó has become for these birds an intellectual property, so to speak, received by inheritance. Consequently, the horrible carnage produced by the feather dealers and their hired helpers affects not only the herons that normally live on the said island, but most certainly, the herons of a vast region of the Lower Amazon, in general.

The falling off of the herons in the last decades is a fact, noted not only in Marajó, but also in many other parts of the territory of Pará, where they were formerly abundant. It is a positive fact, which stands in harmony with the manifold information that I have taken the pains to gather from trustworthy and unbiased

persons, and I will not permit this assertion to be called by interested parties a mere theory. There must certainly be, in the body of the Legislature itself, some Representatives that can, from personal observation, confirm what I have just declared.

The most categorical condemnation of the detestable traffic results logically from the question, "What use is made of these heron feathers?" There is only one answer, "The milliners like them." Therefore, they subserve no useful purpose, — they are a mere object of luxury that could be dispensed with perfectly well. Now, must hundreds of thousands of herons perish every year so as to trim ladies' bonnets in the United States and in France? Let the ladies put something else on their hats, — I am speaking most seriously. The author of "The Birds of Brazil" has a perfect right to give this advice, and feels certain of receiving the unanimous support of refined society in every country.

And the Superintendent of the Museum protests in the name of common sense against the barbarous destruction of herons that is being carried on in the Lower Amazon, and would rather resign his position than fail to cry out most emphatically against one of the most scandalous crimes that is perpetrated against nature in this beautiful region.

To return to this crying abuse: I do not desire to proclaim a supposed and theoretical utility that predominates in the herons. Everybody knows that they here as elsewhere are by preference piscivorous. But, besides the fish that they devour, they likewise seek innumerable other river- and lake- animals, both living and dead, and without doubt, produce a beneficent effect in cleansing the adjacent lands, — serving thus as a voluntary health department. The abundance of fish accumulated in flood-time among the islands at the mouth of the Amazon is, moreover, so great that there is no necessity for driving away by armed force the herons from the hospitable board which opulent nature has spread out before them.

Seeing that, in this way, the graceful herons in the Amazon Valley are, from a purely utilitarian view-point, so to speak, neutral, as far as we are concerned, it is evident that my reasons for condemning the excessive warfare are predominantly on the esthetic and humanitarian side. I think, however, that these reasons are sufficiently weighty to gain the sympathy of every friend of nature,

and to indicate to the government the course that ought to be followed in this question.

Let not the Executive authorities be misled by the cry of a half dozen soulless creatures, that perchance may have the *naïveté* of calling a law prohibiting the extermination of herons "a restriction of personal liberty," and endeavor to befog the unwary as to how people think about these things in other countries.

Let the Government take into account that, perhaps, the very men, who here at the mouth of the Amazon are directly culpable of the barbarous persecution of the elegant herons, may be the foremost to sow and cultivate the bad opinion which is entertained abroad in regard to our state of civilization. At any rate, it is not for their advantage that the people here should know that, in the United States of America, some of the animals which have a tendency to become extinct, as, for example, the buffalo, are to-day under the direct protection of the government; and that in Switzerland, the laws in favor of the majority of the birds are right rigorous. Now, they are the republics where democratic institutions preserve their most unadulterated and genuine character; they are especially worthy to serve as a model, for they know how to mark the limits of personal liberty and do not hesitate to cut off, in time, certain excrescencies where personal liberty encroaches on public interests and the common welfare. I have purposely chosen two countries that have a republican form of government, one from the old and one from the new world, pointing out merely in passing the Draconian game laws that are in force in most of the monarchical countries. Every German, for instant, knows that in his fatherland nobody thinks of discussing such questions.

In the time of the Empire, I had occasion several times as specialist in the Department of Agriculture to broach the suitability of drawing up a set of general game laws. Several ministers appeared favorably disposed, but always drew back before having taken a decided step. However, I have not ceased to prepare the ground in the public press and in my books on Brazilian Natural History; and I have had the satisfaction of seeing some of my ideas accepted by certain municipalities in the State of Rio de Janeiro, whose governing bodies have formulated their codes, in the sections referring to hunting and fishing, according to sound principles and more than once have expressed to me their delight at the beneficent results from these measures.

With the present political organization of Brazil, I deem that the laws in relation to hunting and fishing have passed advantageously to the legislative sphere of the states, inasmuch as the drafting of a code of game laws for the entire country of Brazil really presents great difficulties, by reason of the diversity both of physical conditions and of animal life, in the North and South, in the Interior and on the Coast, — a diversity that produces even a certain antagonism in phenological phenomena.

While the manifest lessening of game in the South of Brazil induced me to take up my pen and made me a propagandist, there never seemed to me to be such an urgent necessity for immediate legislative measures as now, in view of the barbarous warfare promoted here in Pará by certain conscienceless traffickers against the herons. This war of extermination is even more immoral and despicable than that against which I took the open field in my book on „The Birds of Brazil,” relating to the hunting of humming-birds in Bahia (p. 243).

It is not a sickly sentimentalism, Your Excellency, that urges me to pen these lines, but the thorough comprehension that where hunting ends, murder begins; it is a holy indignation against certain vandals who are violating one of the greatest charms of our land, with a view to mercenary gain, it is a vigorous conviction that the Government ought to heed my appeal, and that it can no longer remain indifferent in face of the sad spectacle I have just revealed.

I recommend as the means that to me seem most salutary the following measures:

First, The absolute prohibition of hunting herons and ibises from the first of June until the end of January following. Second, The recommendation of nesting-places on private property to the especial protection of the owners, and the rendering of those on public lands inviolable. Third, The laying of prohibitive duties on the feathers of herons and ibises, both on those issuing from Pará, and on those in transit.

Your Excellency declared in your luminous message to the Legislature that the Museum would contribute to the progress of the State from the standpoint of good morals and of material development. This confidence does us great honor; and, precisely, as we wish to correspond to this confidence, we energetically call

attention to a subject in which is directly imperiled the reputation of the state of civilization in the Amazon Valley.

However, Your Excellency will be the best judge whether the matter possesses the necessary importance, and is worthy of the attention and procedure I desire. Nevertheless, as a naturalist and a scholar, I feel the enormous responsibility that would fall upon me, were I to hold my peace, and not utter publicly a cry of indignation, which I simply cannot repress, either from the standpoint of a private citizen and scientific writer or from that of an official guardian of the beauties of nature.

Your Obedient Servant,
(Signed) DR. EMIL A. GOELDI.

II.

MEMORIAL PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNOR OF PARÁ
MAY 1ST. 1896.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, THE GOVERNOR:

It is not without grief that I see approaching, on the one hand, the season when the unrestrained hunting of the white herons, eluding legal restrictions, will take on redoubled force; and, on the other, the day on which the Legislature will adjourn, thus ending all its legislative functions for the present year.

As is well known, (I am tempted to say, I wish it were not so generally known,) from June on, those winged beauties will incubate, and it is just at this season that the males have the splendid plumes, with which nature has adorned them, especially well developed, but which here constitute their chief misfortune, for human greed does not hesitate in slaughtering, in the Amazon Valley alone, hundreds of thousands of herons every year.

I feel compelled to keep on exposing this vile business to public indignation. As I expose to the public gaze this black blot of indigenious traffic in the manner it deserves, I am animated and strengthened by that sacred fire of the sincere propagandist, who without intending to wound persons, attacks fearlessly the vices and errors of human society.

The pure flame of this fire is the source where I seek constancy and tenacity for the struggle against an evil that is firmly fixed; and where, at the same time, I drink deep draughts of courage that is requisite to bring once more this offense before the Executive.

I beg leave to present to Your Excellency a rapid retrospective sketch of the history of the question in regard to the destruction of herons and ibises during the past year, and then indicate its present status.

In a long memorial, dated May 10th, 1895, I besought legislative action, recommending as the chief measures the following:

First, The absolute prohibition of hunting herons and ibises from the first of June until the end of January following. Second, The recommendation of nestings-places on private property to the protection of the owners, and the rendering of those on public lands inviolable. Third, The laying of prohibitive duties on the feathers of herons and ibises, both on those issuing from Pará, and on those in transit.

My memorial was transmitted, by order of Your Excellency on May 22d, 1895, to the State Legislature, and was the topic of deliberation before the House of Representatives. The "Official Daily" of June 11th, 1895, gives the following report:

"The Committees on Constitution and Industry, in joint session, having examined the document in which the Director of the Pará Museum begs measures on the part of the Legislative power against the destruction of herons and ibises on the Island of Marajó, and against the traffic in the feathers of the said birds, inasmuch as the necessary measures to be taken are beyond the jurisdiction of the Legislature as they belong solely and exclusively to the Municipal Government, are of the opinion that, inasmuch as the plan of the Director of the Museum contains considerations in other respects useful and reasonable, the same should be transmitted by copy to the Municipal Councils of the Island of Marajó, through the Governor of the State, urging them to adopt vigorous by-laws, in order to do away with the abuses disclosed in the before named memorial."

Committee Chamber of the House of Representatives of the State of Pará. May 27th, 1895.

With an interest that can easily be imagined, I watched the effect of this arrangement, which turned out perceptibly weaker than I had desired, as is seen by comparing the Committee's report with my memorial of last year.

Through the State Secretary, the Councils of the various municipalities of the Island of Marajó were invited to draw up their codes in harmony with the mode expressed in the report. I have failed to receive complete information and data as to the manner in which this invitation was received in Marajó; I even doubt whether the Government itself possesses them, as it has, perchance, not received as yet the respective replies from all the Municipal Councils. Perhaps it might be well to issue an official

circular calling for a reply; it would, at least, have the beneficial effect of making known the importance that attaches to the subject, and of encouraging favorably disposed persons, and of arousing the laggards.

Nevertheless, replies were promptly forwarded by a few municipalities, and even found their way into the daily press. I had the great joy of seeing in the "Republic" of the 17th of July, 1895, that the Municipal Council of Ponta de Pedras had just enacted by-laws prohibiting absolutely the hunting of herons and ibises for commercial purposes. I learned, moreover, from private sources that in several other municipalities the communication from the State Secretary awakened an interest, and the Councils strove to harmonize their codes with the case in question. In accordance with the same information, I found out that in some other places the result was quite satisfactory, while in still others it was not; and, if my information is entirely trustworthy, as I believe it is, there are municipalities where—I am sorry to say—the said law is a dead letter and the authorities treat lightly the governmental recommendation.

But this circumstance need not surprise us. I foresaw it, and also many others who think as I do. I recognize the cause of the results falling so far short of the expectations of the Government, and beg leave to point it out.

It has its root in the wording of the said recommendation. Now, I am not a professional in legislation and jurisprudence, and do not intend in any way to reflect on the superiority that the honorable State Legislature indisputably possesses both in its totality and in its respective committees. With the assurance of my profoundest respect and deference toward the illustrious wisdom of the body of State representatives, I request permission to declare that, in this very special question, the report from the joint session of the Committees on Constitution and Industry does not coincide with my petition as formulated at the close of my memorial that was presented on May 10, 1895.

That the prohibition of heron hunting should be restricted to the Island of Marajó was not my intention. If possibly, I was not sufficiently clear in my exposition, I beg to be pardoned. But I cannot help saying that, in my opinion, the said restriction is the source and cause of the inadequacy that I had already foreseen, and that is to-day practically proven. Being limited to the Island

of Marajó, it would really be a local law, an exceptional law, and, consequently, one can easily comprehend why the Legislature doubted its special competency to act in the matter.

But, as I never asked for a law of that character, but rather for a law that applied to the whole territory of the State of Pará, I still think that this constitutes a question that depends on the Legislature, and that is perfectly comprehended within the sphere of its action. And, as such is my belief, I beg a reconsideration, for it seems to me to be a subject that is in every respect worthy of the attention of the representatives of the State.

I have not been the only one, Your Excellency, to consider insufficient a law that is restricted to the Island of Marajó. There were many others who grieved over such a legislative scaling-down in a problem that demands, indeed, an energetic and radical remedy based on the teaching of Hippocrates.

A few days after my last year's memorial, together with the respective report from the House of Representatives, had been published in the "Official Daily", I received from a proficient North American naturalist, who has resided a long while in this city and is well known as an enthusiastic botanist, a letter in English, in which he voices these sentiments: — "You have performed an admirable service in calling the attention of the Legislature to the frightful destruction of herons and ibises. Half-way measures will never do; It should be considered a crime, punishable with a heavy fine and severe imprisonment, to kill a single bird; otherwise, they will become extinct, as is the case with the dodo in New Zealand. I know little bays which formerly were white with herons, and to-day it is hard to find there a single bird. The law ought not to be limited to Marajó, but to extend throughout the whole State; for, seeing that this island is on the point of being drained out, the herons are being destroyed, at the same time, for all the upper river."

There may be some who think that I am making a clamor in the form of the title of one of Shakespeare's dramas. But only those will so think who have absolutely no idea of the real dimensions of the evil.

I am not obliged to go far to characterize clearly the calamitous dimensions. According to the statistics of the State Custom House, it is officially stated (through the "Bulletins" of the said department

for the current year) that the monthly exportation from the port of Pará of heron plumes never was, and at present, is not less than seventy contos of réis (\$ 14,000). The same official source reveals, moreover, that the exportation is made chiefly to the United States of America, while a smaller percentage makes its way to certain European countries (England, France, &c.).

If the annual exportation of heron plumes, amounting to one thousand contos of réis (\$ 200,000) is worthy of public announcement, does it not seem ridiculous (if it were not, at the same time, a cause for just indignation on the part of every true patriot), that these enormous masses of heron feathers go out to foreign countries without paying one cent of duty? (I have my information from a source that is fully competent and trustworthy.)

Export Rubber pays a duty, farm products pay a duty, and everything that represents the fruit of sweat and honest labor pays a duty; while this abominable merchandise, that is the spurious offspring of idleness and murder, goes out scot free, with colors flying, deriding the products of honorable industrial and agricultural occupations, priding itself on its safe conduct and on its immunities.

There cannot be a doubt, Your Excellency, that such a state of things is simply an absurdity in social science. Tacitly to protect this traffic that derives its support from a vile crime, perpetrated against nature in this very land, where, simultaneously, farm and industrial products are burdened with export duties, is an inversion of good sense, —we have two weights and two measures, where the evil gains and the good loses. It is simply an outrage!

I have long been expecting the objection that from the prohibition of the hunting of herons would result a material loss to the State, and that the one thousand contos of réis (\$ 200,000), ceasing to figure as assets in our accounts, would revert to the benefit of the neighboring state. Or, in other words, we should artlessly fail to put a goodly sum into our own pocket, giving our neighbors, at the same time, a fine chance to take the entire trade and to laugh at our scruples.

I answer that the one thousand contos of réis are dishonorably gained, and that I trust the welfare of this state is placed on more secure foundations, so as not to have recourse to reprehensible means by anyone whatever. If, in private life, a neighbor is minded to uncover his dwelling, and sell the tiles at a good price, without

having anything to substitute them, —either thatch or shingles, should I, forsooth, envy or imitate him? By no means.

Now, the case is exactly the same. The senseless heron-hunting is not only a violence wreaked on nature but, at the same time, an indescribable squandering of a sacred and inviolable patrimony. To man has ever been, and still is accorded the right to a wise use of what we might call the „profits” of nature’s treasures, but never the annihilation of the capital itself. If the present generation destroy brutally the legacy received intact from previous generations, it renders itself liable to the reproach of the future.

Man prides himself on being the only rational being. So, naturally, it ought to be his supreme endeavor to comprehend his real part in the world, and his relations to the surrounding creation. Such a reflection ought, as well, to include the future, and take into account those who will follow us.

Well, then, the execrable destruction of herons is an undue disturbance and injury of the universal cosmic order. Detestable because of its low origin, which is blind avarice, it also springs from a very grave error: that of usurping discretionary powers, and of taking for absolute property what, in reality constitutes an *untransferable loan*, of which we owe an account to our descendants. History teaches us what fatal consequences have followed the epochs in which the slogan has been, „après nous le déluge“, and I am well persuaded that the Government does not desire in this special question in regard to the herons, to elevate so deadly a maxim to the plane of an acceptable norm, and of an administrative principle to be observed in matters regarding political economy.

It is also possible that the traffickers may employ yet another means of mitigating, in the eyes of the unwary, the enormity of the offense. They may claim that the heron plumes form a sensible resource for the poor settler on the bayous and lakes in the interior, thus affording an easy method of making a little money for the subsistence of himself and family, and that prohibitive measures would directly harm the needy and indigent fraction of our population. Fortunately, I have at hand the data to overthrow completely this shrewd and clever argument.

I am informed from many sources that the massacre of the herons is chiefly effected by fellows who are disinclined to follow any honorable occupation. Various cattle raisers in Marajó, for

example, have presented me with their complaints that the vile business is carried on by cow-boys, in manifest detriment to their obligations, who idle away the hours in which they should be working and caring for the interests of their employers.

It is easily guessed where the money that results from the sale of the plumes goes to. It is for the greater part exchanged for rum at the neighboring tavern, enticing the man anew from the straight path of useful citizenship. It cannot be otherwise; evil always begets evil. The money which is derived from the sale of heron plumes is not generally applied to the acquisition of the necessary means of subsistence, —on the contrary, it contributes to deprave and vitiate the habits, serving only to add difficulties to the work of the police department.

Money easily earned is easily spent; it does not augment the social welfare, it does not help society, —on the contrary, it demoralizes. The massacre of the herons has an effect diametrically opposed to that of agriculture or any other honorable occupation, and I do not hesitate to make the statement that the moral and social detriment resulting from the toleration of this social cancer is superior to the above mentioned yearly sum that interested parties and the traffickers perverting the facts, strive so much to set forth.

Your Excellency, he who resolutely battles in favor of a course of action like mine, does well to prepare himself and furnish himself beforehand with suitable weapons. These I have in the form of valuable documents, which I will publish, in case of need, in support of the assertions that I have just made. I have at hand warm congratulations, that encourage me to continue with unabated energy in the campaign, which is considered as a highly meritorious work toward inculcating morality in the people of the interior.

Another obstacle to the speedy termination of the traffic in heron plumes consists—to speak bluntly—in an ill-understood commercial competition. To more than one merchant I have put the question: —“Why not have done with the accursed traffic by simply refusing to handle these heron plumes?” The reply is always practically the same, —“If I don’t buy them, my neighbor does, and I get left in the lurch; on the other hand, if you succeed in uprooting this business, I will be the first to congratulate and praise you.” There are few who do not feel that this business is mean and ought to be abolished.

But one observes a certain weakness of character, a lack of necessary energy for a decisive step. The evil, stereotyped by habit, has taken on certain airs as a thing that is good and honorable, while the moral vision was long ago blinded for a clear and conscientious discernment of the difference between the two.

Everything awaits the decisive step of the Government.

I believe it true that, on one hand, nobody would seriously lament prohibitive measures; and, on the other, no one is willing to take the initiative of his own free will, and to abandon what his conscience must declare to be wrong.

There are two means, Your Excellency, which, in the present circumstances, seem to me to be the most efficacious to put a stop to the massacre of herons. First, Prohibitive duties of exportation. Second, A vigorous propagandism against the use of plumes in the importing countries.

The first of these two means is identical with what I formulated in the third clause of my last year's memorial. It is precisely from this means that I expect salutary results; and I very much grieve that it has not become a State law.

In view of the weighty arguments that I have again presented in its favor, I hope that my way of thinking will this time receive the unanimous support of the State Legislature.

Desiring to give a concrete form and a basis of calculation, in accord with the present state of things, to the respective legislative measure, I propose *that there be imposed a State-Tax of four milrèis (80 cents) on each gramme of heron feathers that are exported.*

As to the second measure, Your Excellency, I propose to take it under my charge, and I can assure you that for a long time I have been preparing to wage a campaign *à outrance* in this respect. I know that in regard to the United States of America I can rely on the support of the scientific institutions and of the press to combat a fashion that is so shocking; and, with regard to European countries, there are not lacking excellent elements that will most cordially second my efforts.

In fine, I shall give the greatest publicity to this propagandism in the principal languages of the civilized world, in part by means of the „Bulletin” of the Museum, and in part by publications made on purpose.

I am convinced that both in the new and in the old world my cry of alarm will resound and I expect it will not all be Utopian, believing, as I do, that I shall find on both sides of the ocean, ladies with good intentions, who, in the press and in their daily life, will become uncompromising supporters of our platform.

By the side of the State law, there could advantageously exist municipal by-laws, as they fortunately are now in force in the Island of Marajó.

Finally, I will say that I continue to advocate the necessity of being considered, as matter for State legislation, the first and second clauses of my previous memorial, so as to contribute potentially to the desired effect, and to make clearly understood what is the spirit that should control in the framing of prohibitive duties on the exportation of heron plumes.

In conclusion, Your Excellency, I declare it is merely an entirely logical and natural integral part of my humanitarian campaign, if I undertake to ventilate the question whether these feathers could not be obtained without this wanton destruction of herons. The plumes are a mere object of luxury, and, as such, according to the sound principles of political economy, belong to the category of suitable things to bear, without real loss to human society, a high excise tax.

Now, attempts to breed herons in captivity, and to extract the plumes at stated intervals, ought, in my opinion to be crowned with success; and nobody has the right to call such an effort ridiculous, absurd, and impracticable, for we have recently an exactly parallel case, where methodical breeding is being carried on with splendid results.

With the increasing "pterygomania" (*venia sit verbo!*) of the female sex during the last decades, were not the ostriches in Africa threatened with extermination? And do there not now exist in Algiers a considerable number of establishments where these birds are cared for in a rational and methodical manner, with perfectly satisfactory results?

Do not the very Indians of South America, who are noted for their feather-work, give, from very remote times, a lesson which ought to put to shame the modern cultured man? For they took precaution to breed macaws and parrots, in order to have at hand the material for their feather head-dresses, and even the

majestic harpy, to furnish them with suitable feathers for their arrows. (Goeldi, — Birds of Brazil. p. 51-52 and p. 80.)

Only in passing, I would like to open this new horizon, pointing it out as a worthy means of obviating the calamitous slaughter of the herons, and opening that the before mentioned high export tax would tend rather to favor than to harm such a branch of bird farming.

Your Obedient Servant,
(Signed) DR. EMIL E. GOELDI.

III.
HERON FARMING.*

Second in value to ostrich plumes come those of the heron, which are now frequently seen on ladies' hats as a beautiful decoration. The precious adornment, however, is becoming, with the passage of the years, rarer and rarer, for the flocks of herons, that formerly were so numerous and filled the various swamps, rivers, and lakes of our land, are being horribly decimated by indiscriminate slaughter.

In circles that favor the protection of birds, a request has repeatedly been made to spare the herons more. Nobody can help desiring that this hope should be realized. This beautiful family of birds should be sheltered from destruction, for now means have been devised to breed herons in captivity, so as to obtain their valuable feathers.

The first attempt was made in Tunis in the year 1895. A wide-awake man built in the neighborhood of the city an immense volière with trees and pools of water. The expense of the plant amounted to 14,000 francs. He stocked the volière with 30 young herons that had been captured, paying altogether only 120 francs. The herons multiplied with great rapidity, and at the end of last year, he had 387 birds. As the heron belongs to the omnivorous animals, its keeping is rendered easy, and does not occasion an outlay of more than five francs a head per year.

In Tunis, the flesh of dead horses, mules, and donkeys is fed out to the herons. The net proceeds of the volière are entirely satisfactory; the herons are deplumed twice per year, — the first time in June, and the second at the beginning of October, and every bird yields, on an average, six grammes of feathers, which sell at the rate of five francs per gramme.

At present, the principal country that produces heron plumes

* Translated from an article in the German illustrated journal "Gartenlaube" (Leipzig 1896, No. 2).

is Venezuela, from whose port not less than 600 kilogrammes of feathers are exported to Paris, and represent a value of three million francs.

Heron plumes surpass in value gold itself, for a gramme of gold is worth a little less than two marks and seventy pfennigs, whereas a gramme of heron plumes, as has just been said, costs, on an average, four marks, therefore, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt that heron breeding will develop, succeed, and produce as good results as ostrich farming, or perhaps even better.

What a rich source of income ostrich farming is to-day for the countries of the Cape of Good Hope everybody knows. Suffice it to bear in mind that the production of ostrich plumes on the Cape of Good Hope for the year 1895 rendered the handsome round sum of 500,000 kilogrammes, representing a value of more than 400 millions marks!

In circles that favor the protection of birds a report has recently been made to spare the herons more. Nobody can help desiring that this hope should be realized. This beautiful family of birds should be sheltered from destruction, for now means have been devised to breed herons in captivity, so as to obtain their valuable feathers.

The first attempt was made in Tunis in the year 1893. A wide-spread net built in the neighborhood of the city in numerous volleys with trees and pools of water. The expense of the plant amounted to 1,000 francs. He stocked the volleys with 50 young herons that had been captured, paying altogether only 120 francs. The herons multiplied with great rapidity, and at the end of last year he had 387 birds. As the heron belongs to the omnivorous animals, its keeping is rendered easy and does not occasion an outlay of more than five francs a head per year.

In Tunis the flesh of dead horses, tames, and donkeys is fed out to the herons. The net proceeds of the volleys are chiefly satisfactory, the herons are captured twice per year — the first time in June, and the second at the beginning of October, and every bird yields on an average six grammes of feathers, which sell at the rate of five francs per gramme.

At present, the principal country that produces heron plumes

* Translated from an article in the Omani Illustrated Journal, "L'Asie"