

SCIENCE:

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SWINE PLAGUE.

The present discussion on the infectious disease existing among hogs in the United States, known as the "*Swine Plague*" will, we trust, be productive of some good in giving publicity to certain facts relating to this subject, which should be known and understood by all interested in the sale or consumption of pork.

It appears that a report was sent from the British Consulate at Philadelphia, to England, stating that 700,000 hogs had died of Swine Plague during the year 1880, in one of the Western States.

Those interested in the export trade have contested this statement, and with the very laudable motive of protecting an important American home interest, have endeavored to show that the action of the Consul was founded on erroneous information, and one journal in New York even accuses the British officials of "plotting a senseless scare."

It appears to be now officially admitted that 300,000 hogs died of this disease in one State alone in 1880; and, therefore, the real question now at issue, is not whether the disease exists, but merely how many hundred thousand hogs die in consequence of it annually in each State.

Without going outside of United States official documents the real facts of the case may be stated as follows:

The Swine Plague came into notice about 25 years ago, and on account of its excessive infectious nature, it steadily increased annually until the year 1878, when the Commissioner of Agriculture announced an annual death-rate of hogs for the United States, amounting to a money value of \$20,000,000; as the victims are said to be chiefly among the smaller and leaner animals, probably \$2 per head would be a fair average of value; in that case the number of deaths among hogs by the Swine Plague, actually taken by census, would be 10,000,000 for that year.

As this disease is no sudden epidemic, but has been progressing for a quarter of a century, it is not likely that, in the two years and a half which have passed since this report was made to the United States Government, the disease has much abated. The disease is at this date officially admitted to be raging, and the

mere question of its destructive effects, is only one of degree.

Under these circumstances it would appear unjust to accuse foreign consuls of partial conduct in reporting these facts, and it is equally futile to attempt to suppress them.

The behavior of the New York Produce Exchange in this matter reminds us of the action of the ostrich when it buries its head in the sand at the approach of danger. We have one word of advice to those who would preserve the United States export trade in pork, and that is to admit the existence of Swine Plague, and the increasing contamination of pork by trichinæ. This done, it is not difficult to organize such a system of inspection as will satisfy foreign governments that the shipments of pork from this country are such as can be received with safety. At the date of our writing, a cable dispatch announces that the Austrian Government has interdicted the importation of American pork in any form, and unless our suggestion is accepted without delay, other foreign States will probably follow the example of Austria on this question.

Major J. W. Powell succeeds Clarence King as Director of the United States Geological Survey. This appointment appears to have given general satisfaction, and we consider it a fortunate circumstance that a gentleman of such high professional attainments has accepted this important position.

ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES OF PHILADELPHIA.

A course of practical instruction in Invertebrate Paleontology, to be given under the auspices of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, was inaugurated by Professor Angelo Heilprin, on Tuesday, March 8th, 1881, at 8 P. M., in the Hall of the Academy.

The lectures, twenty-five in number, will be continued on the successive Fridays and Tuesdays of each week, from 4 to 5 o'clock, P. M.

The plan of instruction will embrace the examination of the life-histories of the various geological formations, the discussion of the biological relations of past organic forms, and the practical determination of these forms for the purposes of paleontological inquiry. The demonstrations will be of an essentially practical nature, and will be based upon a careful study of the resources of the Academy's collections.

A course of practical instruction in Mineralogy was also inaugurated by Professor Henry Carvill Lewis, at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, on Tuesday, March 15th, at 8 P. M. The lectures will be continued on successive Mondays and Thursdays at 4 P. M., beginning March 21st.

The course will consist of ten lectures, and will be in great part practical, and confined to Determinative Mineralogy. Blowpipe analysis, and the application of simple chemical tests to the determination of minerals, will be especially dwelt upon. Students will be expected to devote at least half the time to the performance of practical work in this department.

The course will also embrace a reference to Physical and Crystallographic Mineralogy, and to Mineralogical classification.

Application for admission to the above courses may be made to Henry McCook, Chairman of the Committee on Instruction and Lectures.