

Owl taken from one of the towers of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., June 28, 1890. Since that time 475 more have been collected—125, September 14, 1892; and 350, January 8, 1896, making in all a total of 675 'pellets.' This abundant material has been carefully examined and found to contain the remains of 1821 mammals, birds and batrachians as shown in the following table:

- 1119 Meadow Voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)
 - 4 Pine Voles (*Microtus pinetorum*)
- 452 House Mice (*Mus musculus*)
- 134 Common Rats (*Mus decumanus*)
 - 1 White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*)
- 20 Jumping Mice (*Zapus hudsonicus*)
 - 1 Rabbit (*Lepus sylvaticus*)
- 33 Short-tailed Shrews (*Blarina brevicauda*)
- 21 Small Short-tailed Shrews (*Blarina parva*)
 - 1 Star-nosed Mole (*Condylura cristata*)
 - 1 Brown Bat (*Vesperugo fuscus*)
- 2 Sora Rails (*Porzana carolina*)
- 4 Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)
- 3 Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)
 - 1 Vesper Sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*)
- 10 Song Sparrows (*Melospiza fasciata*)
- 4 Swamp Sparrows (*Melospiza georgiana*)
- 1 Swallow (*Petrochelidon*?)
- 1 Warbler (*Dendroica*)
- 6 Marsh Wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*)
- 2 Spring Frogs (*Rana pipiens*?)

A glance at this list will demonstrate to any thoughtful person the immense value of this useful bird in keeping noxious rodents in check. Moreover, judging from the species in the list, it may be seen that the barn owl hunts almost exclusively in open country, such as cultivated fields, meadows and marsh lands, where such pests do most damage. In Germany, according to Dr. Bernard Altum (Journal f. Ornithologie, 1863, pp. 43 and 217) the barn owl feeds extensively on shrews. In 703 'pellets,' a number only slightly greater than that which I examined, he found remains of 1,579 shrews, an average of over two to each 'pellet,' while our 675 'pellets' contained only 54 shrews, an average of one skull to every 12½ pellets. On the other hand our

material contained the remains of 2½ mice to each 'pellet,' or 93 per cent. of the whole mass. The birds, which constitute about 4¾ per cent. of the owl's food, are in the main species of little economic importance.

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CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

THE ETHNOLOGY OF TIBET.

A VALUABLE article on this subject is published in the last report of the National Museum (Washington, 1895), prepared by the experienced traveler, Mr. W. W. Rockhill. It describes the social customs, dress, habitations, agriculture, food, music, money, religion, etc., of the Tibetans with much minuteness.

Their civilization was demonstrably obtained either from India or China, those who may be styled the indigenous inhabitants contributing very little to it. These indigenes are now best represented by the scanty and semi-nomadic population of the northern plateaux, which rise to an average altitude of more than 15,000 feet above the sea level. They are known as 'Drupa,' and although they belong to the same linguistic family as the Burmese they are more remote than these from the physical type of the Mongols. The hair, instead of being straight, is wavy, the eyes brown or hazel, the nose often narrow and not much depressed at the root. The skin is frequently nearly white and the cheeks rosy, though on exposure the complexion may become a dark brown.

These traits present a physical type quite dissimilar from that which ethnographers term the Mongolian.

RESEARCHES IN AMERICAN ARCHÆOLOGY.

THE twenty-ninth report of the Peabody Museum of Archæology and Ethnology, at Cambridge, Mass., is brief, covering but nine pages, but contains a number of inter-

esting references to the researches in which the institution is engaged.

The most noteworthy relates to the exploration of the ancient city of Copan, Honduras. A wonderful stairway has been discovered, twenty-four feet in width, and leading to the summit of a pyramid over one hundred feet in height. It is built of massive blocks of stone, the front of each of the steps being covered with deeply-cut hieroglyphs and delineations of the human form. When once restored and copied, we may indeed find on it, as the report says, "the most important hieroglyphic inscription in Central America."

A curious addition to the Museum is the only ancient New England bow in existence. It is five feet seven inches in length, being much longer than has generally been stated. The Hemenway collection from the Salt River valley has been deposited in the Museum by the executors and arranged by Dr. J. Walter Fewkes. About twelve students are studying in the department under the direction of Professor F. W. Putnam and his assistant, Dr. Dorsey.

THE ALLEGED TERTIARY MAN OF BURMAH.

CONSIDERABLE attention was attracted early last year by the assertion of Dr. Noetling, repeated in various periodicals, that he had discovered in a miocene layer, on the banks of the Irrawadi river, rude flint implements of 'palæolithic' patterns. Later in the year he announced that the strata were not miocene, but certainly pliocene, and therefore tertiary man was still saved.

Another geologist, Mr. Oldham, in *Natural Science*, September, 1895, questioned the occurrence of the flints in the original deposit. It appears that the face of the outcrop has a veneer of mud washed down from the super-incumbent strata, adherent to its ferruginous surface, and that the chipped flints are found in this coating.

Just such 'implements' are scattered over the plateau above, and would naturally be washed down with the surface soil in heavy rains.

This demonstration seems to relegate the Burmese find to that region of extreme doubtfulness in which at present every alleged discovery of tertiary man in Europe or America rests.

RACIAL DEGENERACY IN AMERICA.

A WELL prepared article on this subject is contributed to the *University Medical Magazine*, January, 1896, by Dr. Albert S. Ashmead. He reviews the prevalence of goitre, cretinism, leprosy and dwarf stature in America as factors in ethnic physical and psychical degeneration. In his survey he includes the native as well as the immigrant American and African races, and collects a large amount of references on the subject. On the whole, it cannot be said that he has shown any special tendency of humanity in the New World to retrogressive transformation or racial pathology. The causes to which he alludes are frequent in the other continents with like effects.

What would be especially desirable in this direction would be a study of the white race in the United States in isolated localities where its members have been subjected to the environment for a hundred years or more with little access of crossings from without. Undoubtedly, important modifications have taken place, but they have not yet been critically collected.

PSYCHOLOGICAL NOTES.

THE SENSE OF EQUILIBRIUM.

INTERESTING experiments are reported in the *Biologisches Centralblatt* by Bethe on the connection between the sense of equilibrium and the semi-circular canals. He finds that doves are not well adapted to exhibiting this connection; he allows dead doves with their wings distended by wires, to fall