

the University of Oregon as professor of geology.

GEORGE W. MUSGRAVE has resigned his position in the Bureau of Soils, United States Department of Agriculture, to become assistant professor of agronomy at Rutgers College.

DR. R. KUDO, formerly in charge of the department of protozoology of the Imperial Sericultural Experiment Station of Japan, and last year temporary assistant at the Rockefeller Institute in New York City, has been appointed instructor in zoology at the University of Illinois.

MRS. HELEN B. OWENS has been appointed instructor in mathematics at Cornell University.

JOSEPH WARREN PHELAN has been appointed lecturer on industrial chemistry at Harvard University. Harlan True Stetson has been appointed instructor in astronomy in the same institution.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

THE SCIENTIFIC NAME OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON

THE technical name of the passenger pigeon has for many years been *Ectopistes migratorius* (Linnæus) (= *Columba migratoria* Linnæus, "Syst. Nat.," ed. 12, I., 1766, p. 285). There is, however, another name, *Columba canadensis* Linnæus ("Syst. Nat.," ed. 12, I., 1766, p. 284), based on the *Turtur canadensis* of Brisson ("Ornith.," I., 1760, p. 118), that needs consideration. Reference to Brisson shows conclusively that his detailed description is that of the female passenger pigeon, as he mentions particularly the rufescent tail-spots. Both *Columba canadensis* Linnæus and *Columba migratoria* Linnæus are of equal pertinence, and there seems to be no reason for the rejection of the former, since both the International and the American Ornithologists' Union codes of nomenclature provide definitely for the enforcement of the principle of anteriority (page precedence) in such cases. We should, therefore, hereafter call the passenger pigeon *Ectopistes canadensis* (Linnæus).

HARRY C. OBERHOLSER

ALLEGED REDISCOVERY OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON

STATEMENT BY JOHN M. CLARKE, DIRECTOR .
NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM

The enclosed letter from Mr. M. Rasmussen, of Amsterdam, N. Y., is in reply to an inquiry from me regarding a statement of his discovery which Mr. Rasmussen had left with one of my associates at the State Museum.

I have had a personal interview with Mr. Rasmussen since the date of the enclosed letter, in which he tells me that he has been a student and observer of birds for twenty-five years; that he had with him on this date, October 1, Mr. C. O. Wilson and Mr. William Sanders, of Amsterdam, both students, and that they were together for a bird study trip through the country in the vicinity of West Galway and Charlton, N. Y.

56 GLEN AVE.,

AMSTERDAM, N. Y., October, 5, 1918.

DR. JOHN M. CLARKE,
Director, State Museum,
Albany, N. Y.

Dear Sir: Answering your letter of yesterday: Yes I am absolutely sure that the birds were passenger pigeons and not the mourning dove. I could not have made this positive observation by seeing the flock, because we did not get close enough to make sure, but some were in a buckwheat field on the opposite side of the road from the field where we raised the flock, and because we knew, by seeing the flock and by the whistling sound of their wings, that we had seen wild pigeons we took precaution to get as close to them as possible. Two of us were fortunate enough to have a bird light on a low limb of a tree only a few feet in front of us, as we were standing still under cover in the edge of the woodlot, while my dog was raising the birds in the field. We were so close that we could see the orange-red skin about the eyes, and the bluish color of the back and the head with no black spot near the ear region; also the large size of the bird convinced us that we had a passenger pigeon before us, and that we had seen a small flock of them a few minutes before.

The mourning dove is not so rare a bird to me. I have seen small flocks of them from time to time during the twenty-five years I have lived in this state.

I never but once before saw wild passenger

pigeons and that was near Ithaca, about twenty years ago.

Very truly yours,

S. M. RASMUSSEN

**DO WE WANT A GREAT PRIVATE INSTITUTION
FOR INVENTORS LIKE THE INSTITUTE
OF FRANCE FOR ARTISTS?**

I AM impressed doubtfully by a pretentious plan which I have seen for a national laboratory for invention and research. I question seriously if inventors want a great, powerful group of men in existence who can do them just as much injury as good by its hasty condemnation of their so-termed "useless" inventions as by helping them with those which certain men, chiefs of proposed bureaus, may see something in.

Let us not forget that Professor Langley and Mr. Graham Bell who backed him were both ridiculed by the three greatest pioneers of their time, Lord Kelvin, Carnegie and Newcomb. Have times really changed so amazingly since then?

Men working in laboratories like that of the Geophysical and Terrestrial Magnetic Survey are virtually research men, given a free hand and told to go ahead, as I understand it, whereas in this proposed institution the inventor is taken in as a partner so to speak in the institution and runs the danger of having his invention black-balled by some committee of the institution when a difference of opinion arises regarding his work.

We must remember further that the institution would be to inventors what the municipal lodging house is to tramps. The institution would serve in a measure as an asylum to which every man who importunes men of wealth to supply him with funds for use in his own way would be committed. If the amount of money subscribed optimistically by private individuals for the purpose of developing new inventions were concentrated in one institution, such an institution would be a colossal affair. Would not the effect of such an institution be to check the generosity of men of means towards individual inventors and make them refer the inventor to that institution just as they have by the thousand escaped their duty in fostering research by referring

the importuning individual to the Rockefeller and the Carnegie Institutions?

The laboratory idea is all right as a place to work in, but let us encourage rather than discourage individual gifts to individual inventors, for no man is big enough not to have a blind side. Let there be a consulting office to which would-be investors in inventions could write and get opinions about inventions, but don't let us shut the door on the inventor by creating the municipal lodging house idea to which those with money will turn in shirking from their duty towards the inventors with whom they come in contact. With conditions as they are, we were getting out the year before the war, I understand, many more inventions than all the other nations in the world combined. Individual willingness to support inventors must be increasing rather than decreasing in America.

When I think of Langley, the Wrights, Curtiss and a host of others, I can not seem to fit them into this plan at all. Is it not true that the Institute of France, which assumed to pass upon the excellence of the work of young artists, turned down the great Rodin's work, and that it was only his supreme genius in sculpture that enabled him to live down the disgrace of its refusal to recognize him, and did he not when they wished later to acknowledge their error, refuse to allow his name to be proposed? There is a similarity between the individualist stimulus which spurs on both the inventor and the artist, and the question might now be raised as to whether a great institute for invention, similar to the Institute of France for artists, should be created, by which "a standard of merit would be placed upon any invention whatever, and its seal of approval would be equivalent to saying whether the invention was good or bad."

I wish to challenge the idea of committee estimation of inventions. There is a danger of no small proportions in it. What body of men can sit and read the volumes of claims of an unending stream of inventors and not become stale, especially if this work continues for years? What is more discouraging than the cold water of a board's decision, even though it