

### THE EXTINCT GREAT AUK

Eggs of any kind are expensive enough nowadays but those of the great auk are so high—and not on account of the war, either—that only a millionaire could afford to buy a dozen, says the Baltimore American. Indeed, it is doubtful if there are more than that many in the world.

The great auk was a sea fowl that in former days had its most important breeding place on a rock called Funk island, 32 miles off Newfoundland coast. Whalers provisioned their ships with the birds (which were so fat that they are said to have been utilized as fuel), and fishermen stole their eggs by wholesale.

In consequence of such depredations the species became extinct about 70 years ago, and today to represent it there are only a few stuffed specimens and skeletons in museums. Also a few eggs, one of which in 1859 fetched \$90 at auction. Since then, however, they have gone up. In 1882 one was sold for \$500; another egg, in 1895, was knocked down at \$825. Four years later one brought \$1,500, and in 1900 the price quoted for a specimen was \$1,678.

The Smithsonian Institution possesses an egg and a barrelful of miscellaneous auk bones—the latter collected by a scientific expedition which it sent to Funk island for the purpose.

One day a few years ago a scientist connected with the Smithsonian happened to be in London and, passing a taxidermist's shop, he saw a stuffed great auk in the window. He nearly dropped with astonishment.

But just as arrangements for its purchase at a great price were on the point of being completed the discovery was made that the bird was a "camouflage," made out of odds and ends of ducks, geese and other birds and fowls.

### SUCCESSFUL WAR SURGERY

American war hospitals are recognized as being without an equal anywhere and the surgeons and nurses in them are working wonders in the treatment of sick and wounded men. The largest American evacuation hospital, not far from the battle line was equipped with 1800 beds and its surgeons, among the foremost in their profession in the world can take care of 2500 surgical cases in 15 to 16 hours.

The wounded men reached the hospital within the shortest possible time, the methods of treating them were the best known to science and the equipment of the hospital was unsurpassed; as a result 90 per cent of the wounds were treated without any pus being allowed to form in them.

Soldiers often entered the hospital with wounds that ordinarily would be expected to bring death within a short time and left it practically whole and sound.

For example a man was brought in with his chin shot entirely away. The surgeons were obliged to perform five different operations for him but they succeeded in building a new chin and jaw. It was a common thing to save arms and legs which the old-time surgeon could not possibly have saved but would have amputated promptly, believing that the only way to save the life of the patient—and the chances, at that, were usually unfavorable. Delicate operations on punctured lungs and the intestines are performed daily and the lives of many men are thus saved.

Aside from the merciful, humanitarian considerations of saving lives and limbs and preventing suffering, the efficient, up-to-date hospital treatment available for American soldiers—they could not get better or more competent surgical attention in the best hospitals in their home land—pays well from a financial point of view; it is figured that one of the big evacuation hospitals which has been operated under American control but a short time by caring for U. S. soldiers has saved no less than \$3,000,000 to Uncle Sam in insurance; that is, this amount in insurance would have come out of the government's funds had the men treated in this hospital died.

### LONGEVITY OF OUR PRESIDENTS

An article in a British medical journal some time ago called attention to the remarkable longevity of the presidents of the United States. Their ages, it was recalled, were as follows: 67, 90, 83, 85, 73, 80, 78, 79, 68, 71, 53, 65, 74, 64, 77, 56, 66, 63, 70, 49, 56, 71, 67, 58. Those who died at 56, 49 and 58 were, respectively, Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley who were assassinated. The ages of the 24 men total 1,663 and the average is 69 years each, indicating that the duties and responsibilities of the presidency apparently do not shorten the lives of incumbents.

The following are generally given as the causes of death of the presidents: Washington, pneumonia (more correct accounts state edematous affection of the windpipe or membranous croup); J. Adams, debility; Jefferson, chronic diarrhea; Madison, debility; Monroe, debility; J. Q. Adams, paralysis; Jackson, consumption and dropsy; Van Buren, asthmatic catarrh; Harrison, bilious pleurisy; Tyler, bilious attack (with bronchitis); Polk, chronic diarrhea; Taylor, cholera morbus and typhoid fever, Fillmore, debility; Pierce, dropsy and inflammation of stomach; Buchanan, rheumatic gout; Lincoln, assassination; Johnson, paralysis; Grant, cancer of the tongue and throat; Hayes, paralysis of the heart; Garfield, assassination; Arthur, Bright's disease, paralysis and apoplexy; Cleveland, debility; B. Harrison, pneumonia; McKinley, assassination.