

ILLINOIS AS IT IS;

ITS

HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY, STATISTICS, CONSTITUTION, LAWS, GOVERNMENT,
FINANCES, CLIMATE, SOIL, PLANTS, ANIMALS, STATE OF HEALTH,
PRAIRIES, AGRICULTURE, CATTLE-BREEDING, ORCHARDING,
CULTIVATION OF THE GRAPE, TIMBER-GROWING,
MARKET-PRICES, LANDS AND LAND-PRICES,
GEOLOGY, MINING, COMMERCE,
BANKS, RAILROADS, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, NEWSPAPERS, ETC., ETC.



BY

FRED. GERHARD.



WITH

A PRAIRIE AND WOOD MAP, A GEOLOGICAL MAP, A POPULATION
MAP, AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS.



CHICAGO, ILL.:
KEEN AND LEE.

PHILADELPHIA:
CHARLES DESILVER,
1857.

met in the trade; the blood-wort, *Sanguinaria canadensis*, L.; milk-tare, *Polygala senega* L.; *Cassia Marilandica* L.; *Lobelia inflata* L.; *Menyanthes trifoliata* L.; *Sassafras officinale* Nees. We shall, however, not exhibit ingratitude towards some popular remedies, whose virtues entitle them to mention here, for example, the slippery elm (*ulmus fulva* Mich.), and the oriental sesame, frequently growing in our gardens (*sesamum orientale* L.); the interior bark of the former and the leaves of the latter, may be recommended as mucilaginous remedies, the latter, especially, for summer complaints; and an infusion of water-melon seeds may be drunk in case of dropsy, after intermitting fevers.

We shall conclude with the best and most efficient medicinal herb. Various species of the vine grow here, they climb the highest trees, and separate themselves from the trunk, so that the bunches of grapes hang down from the twigs as big as one's arm; the grapes are small, of good flavour, and are much used by housewives for preserves; if cultivated this grape attains a larger size, and is most succulent. The American vine, less influenced by the weather than the European, admits of more successful cultivation than the latter. The fox-grape (*Vitis labrusca* L.), is the most improvable variety, and furnishes various brands; Isabella, &c. The tilling of vines makes rapid progress in the Western States, and is already commenced in Illinois. St. Clair and Monroe Counties in the south produce an excellent Catawba wine, which may be safely compared to good Rhine-wine, and is nearly equal in strength to the Hungarian wines. Also in the environs of Peoria and Nauvoo, the cultivation of the vine has been commenced, and that with a success which bids fair to be lasting. Let us hope, that at no distant time many counties of the fertile Prairie State will be clothed in the green dress of this noble plant.

The times have long since passed when herds of buffaloes were feeding in the prairies of Illinois, and the beaver built her dwellings here, and the elk (*Elaphus canadensis* Ray), bounded through the forests. The latter must now be hunted up, far away in Minnesota. The last beaver was killed in Wisconsin, in 1819, and the last buffalo (*Bison Americanus*, Gm.), on this side of the Mississippi, was seen in 1832. Also the black bear (*ursus Americanus* Pall.), has become very rare. Civilization has driven all these beasts, together with the Indians, to the

north and west. Nevertheless the hunter cannot complain of want of occupation. The largest animal of the forest is the Virginian stag, midway in size between the European stag and roe. Of carnivorous animals may be found the red fox (*Vulpes fulvus* Desm.), the gray fox (*Vulpes Virginianus* Dekay), the prairie wolf (*Canis latrans* Say), the common wolf (*Lupus Occidentalis* Richardson), the wild cat (*Lynx rufus*, Temm.); but scarcely a single specimen of the panther (*Felis concolor* L.); the otter (*Lutra Canadensis* Sabine), the mink (*Putorius visor* L.), the marten (*Mustela Canadensis* L.), the pole-cat (*Mephitis Americana* Desm.), the badger (*Meles Labradoria* Sabine); lastly, the raccoon (*Procyon lotor*, L.), (*Waschbär*, in German), which can be easily tamed, and runs freely about the dwellings; he has received his Latin and German names probably on account of his rubbing every object with his forepaws, and splashing about in the water. That he immerses every morsel of food in the water before devouring it, is a mere fable, which, however, may still be found in many treatises on zoology. The farmer is his sworn enemy, since the raccoon not only steals away his poultry, but entering the maize-fields at a time when the grains are just milky, commits great devastation, by spoiling more than twenty times the amount he devours. The opossum (*Didelphys Virginiana* Pennant), with his naked rat-like tail, looks extremely ugly, but furnishes excellent roast-meat, for which reason he is not skinned, but, like the hog, dipped in boiling water. This animal brings forth eleven young ones, which she carries about in a pouch in her belly.

We have besides, the red, gray, black, and mottled, together with the flying squirrel (*Pteromys volucella* Harl), the American marmot (*Arctomys monax* Gm.), the muskrat (*Fiber Zibethicus* L.), and two species of rabbits, to wit: *Lepus nanus* Schreb., and *Lepus Americanus* Erzl.; an infinite number of rats, mice, &c.

The largest bird of prey is the white-headed eagle (*Haliaetus leucocephalus* L.), which the Union has chosen for its emblem. With his wings spread he measures more than seven feet. The Washington eagle (*Haliaetus Washingtonii*, And.), is by many believed to be identical with the white-headed eagle, although, while both head and tail of the latter are white, those of the former on the contrary are black, and further, while the beak of the white-headed eagle is yellow, that of the Washington eagle is of an entirely different dusky hue.