

## CLINTON HART MERRIAM

**M**ERRIAM, CLINTON HART, chief of the United States Biological Survey since 1885, author, authority on ornithology, mammalogy and the geographic distribution of animals and plants in North America, with an especial line of research on the subject of Indian basketry, is a scientist whose native bent was strong. He says of himself, "I always wanted and meant to be a naturalist, and my parents helped me in every way." His especial taste and desire in childhood and youth was in the direction of natural history, and his career is an instance of what a man can accomplish by following the strong inclination of his temperament, when he devotes himself to thorough study and investigation, and of how largely he can add to the stores of scientific knowledge in his chosen department by individual insight and industry.

He was born, December 5, 1855, in New York city. His father, a man of integrity and industry, was a banker and commission broker, and later in life retired from business. He was a member of congress for a time. Of his mother, whose maiden name was Caroline Hart, Mr. Merriam says: "My mother was an exceptionally superior woman, and her influence had much to do in shaping my early life." Strong and healthy as a boy, he lived at his father's home at Locust Grove, Lewis county, in Northern New York, near the Adirondacks. Here he did all kinds of farm work. It was the wish of his parents that he have a college education and accordingly he went to Easthampton, Massachusetts, there to prepare for the Sheffield scientific school of Yale college. At the Sheffield he specialized in zoölogy. He studied medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, graduating in 1879. At once he took up the practice of medicine and surgery at Locust Grove, New York, and was so engaged until 1885. Previously to these years he had accompanied Hayden's Survey as naturalist in 1872, and had been assistant on the United States Fish Commission in 1875. In 1885 he became chief of the division of Ornithology and Mammalogy (now

the United States Biological Survey), which position he held in 1905.

As surgeon of the steamship *Proteus*, he sailed from Newfoundland to the Arctic seal fisheries, 1883. In 1891 he was appointed by President Harrison on the Bering Sea Commission and visited Alaska to investigate the condition of the fur seal fishery on the Pribilof Islands. In 1889 he made a biological survey of the San Francisco mountain region and painted desert of Arizona, and he has from time to time made exploring expeditions in the far West. He went to Alaska in 1899, as secretary of the Harriman Alaska expedition.

He has described about five hundred new species of North American mammals, and has written several hundred papers on biologic subjects. He says of his medical career that it might almost be called an accident, as the real endeavor of his life, its definite aim, has been fixed on themes of a biological nature. He is a member of the Republican party. Huxley, Darwin and Wallace have formed his favorite reading. He says that school and its companionships were comparatively trivial in their influence over him. His father, his mother, and Professor Spencer F. Baird have been the personalities most deeply affecting his character.

He is a member of the American Ornithologists' Union; of the National Academy of Sciences; of the American Philosophical Society, and of the Zoölogical Society of London, England. He is the author of "The Birds of Connecticut" (1877); "Mammals of the Adirondacks" (1882-84); "Results of a Biological Survey of San Francisco Mountain Region and Desert of Little Colorado in Arizona" (1890); "Biological Reconnoissance of Idaho" (1891); "Geographic Distribution of Life in North America" (1892); "Trees, Shrubs, Cactuses and Yuccas of the Death Valley Expedition" (1893); "Laws of Temperature—Control of the Geographic Distribution of Terrestrial Animals and Plants" (1894); "Monographic Revision of the Pocket Gophers" (*Geomyrdæ*) (1895); "Biological Survey of Mount Shasta, California" (1899); and "Life Zones and Crop Zones of the United States" (1898).

He was married October 15, 1886, to Virginia Elizabeth Gosnel. Their two children are living in 1906.