

a desirable contribution to the literature of the general subject. The *Mustelidæ*, like most other families of North American Mammals, have not been systematically revised for many years, during which much new material, hitherto unused, has become available for the purposes of science; while the steady and rapid progress of scientific inquiry has rendered it necessary to reopen and discuss many questions in a new light. The same principles and methods of study which the author has successfully applied to the elucidation of the *Rodentia* of North America have been brought to bear upon the investigation of the *Mustelidæ*.

The Memoir is based upon specimens secured by the Survey under my direction, together with all the material contained in the National Museum, for the opportunity of examining which the Survey acknowledges, in this as in other instances, its indebtedness to the Smithsonian Institution.

The illustrations of the present volume, with few exceptions,\* were engraved by Mr. H. H. Nichols, of Washington, from photographs on wood made under Dr. Coues's direction by Mr. T. W. Smillie, of Washington. This method of natural history illustration may still be regarded in the light of an experiment; but the cuts may be considered fine specimens of the engraver's art, when it is remembered that photography gives no lines to be followed by the graver. Though showing less detail, particularly of the under surfaces of the skulls, than might have been secured by hand-drawing, the cuts possess the merit of absolute accuracy of contour.

This opportunity is taken to reprint, by permission, a Circular relating to the proposed "History", which was addressed by Dr. Coues to the Medical Staff of the Army, of which he is a member. The Circular is sufficiently explicit to require no comment; but I may here express my high appreciation of the courtesy with which the wishes of the Survey have been met by the Surgeon General of the Army.

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*United States Geologist.*

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\* The several figures on the electrottype plate VI were kindly loaned by Mr. E. A. Samuels, of Boston, from the Massachusetts Agricultural Report for 1861. The figures on plate XII were drawn on wood by Mr. S. W. Keen, of Washington, from photographs furnished by Mr. H. W. Parker, of the Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass.