

The balance of evidence is heavily on the side of the scientific experts and doctors, and unfortunately there is an appalling mass of sad statistics to corroborate their evidence. It seems clear that not only should there be further legislation, but that drastic changes must be made either in the art of the production or in the shape of special protection to the luckless women and girls, whose terrible sufferings and death come at times before the public in the shape of a Coroner's inquest. The present and the future of the white lead worker ought not to be lost sight of. The scope and powers of invention are great, and if the manufacturers of this poisonous substance, so much utilised in trade, do not see their way to providing due hygienic arrangements and minimising the risks among their workwomen, they may ere long find a State Bureau intervene, and a Public Health Act brought into operation. The Home Secretary, fortified by the report of the Committee, is now in a position to protect the workers, and to secure for them and their children some immunity from the risks and dangers that beset their craft, and render the Mines and Factory Acts a medium for developing the white lead industry in an innocuous form.

— Science Notes. —

THE PUMA.

THE most recently issued part of the Royal Natural History contains an account of the puma, or American lion, in which are quoted some stories told by Mr. Hudson, in his charming work, "The Naturalist in La Plata." The most curious characteristic of the puma (in South America) is its friendship for man and its submission to death at his hands without resistance. Mr. Hudson relates a story told to him by a South American hunter, who, though an Englishman by birth, had so long lived the life of a Guacho as to have acquired their disregard of the value of human life. (A Guacho, when told of the death of a comrade, has been known to say, "What does that matter, when so many beautiful horses die.") This Englishman told Mr. Hudson that he had killed a puma *once*. The animal was caught by a lasso, and he dismounted and drew his knife to put an end to it. The puma made no resistance, but appeared to know what was coming, for it began to tremble and to whine piteously, while tears ran down its nose. The hunter killed it as it sat there unresisting before him, but immediately afterwards felt that he had committed a murder, and assured Mr. Hudson that it was the only act of his life that filled him with remorse every time he thought of it, an assurance which surprised his hearer not a little, for he knew that the man had killed more than one of his fellow creatures in duels.

On account of the puma's almost invariable disinclination to harm a human being, he has acquired with some persons the character of a coward, but the stories in the Royal Natural History hardly confirm this. He is at constant war with the jaguar, an animal of superior size and equally well armed with teeth and claws, whom the puma persistently follows and persecutes. His favourite diet is horseflesh, and he has been known to spring on a colt among a drove

of horses in charge of a driver, and fell it to the ground. The puma is said to always attack an animal by springing on its back and with his powerful jaws dragging down the victim's head until the neck is dislocated and he falls as though shot.

Many stories are told of the puma having protected man from other wild beasts; Mr. Hudson has one, in his book, of a hunter who was thrown from his horse and broke his leg; being obliged to remain where he was until his companions came in search of him, he was befriended by a puma who kept watch round about him all night, and put to flight a jaguar who had probably marked him as an easy prey.

It was doubtless due to this friendly attitude of the puma to the human race, that it was formerly regarded by the natives of California as a sacred animal. It is said that when Spanish Missionaries first went there, the pumas were a great pest (as indeed they still are in some parts), but nothing would induce the Californians to kill them, until a certain priest, who believed in example as well as precept, encountering a puma in his ride one day, stunned it by a well-directed stone, and after dispatching it with difficulty succeeded in persuading his mule to let the carcase be put on his back. The priest returned to the village, and the people jeered, saying he had picked up the dead body of the puma. On examining it more closely, however, they found it still warm, and bearing marks of violence, and then they looked on the priest with horror, expecting to see him presently fall dead. As nothing of the kind happened they regarded him as a very remarkable and distinguished person, and in time he gained great influence over them, even to the point of inducing them to slay the puma.

Perhaps some readers, who are fond of cats, may think that a puma would be a delightful pet, but there is one great drawback to keeping a tame puma, and that is its intense hatred of dogs. When a hunter is accompanied by dogs, the puma no longer weeps and trembles, but is roused to a "sublime fury." "With hair erect and eyes flashing like balls of lurid fire, it rushes, spitting and snarling, on the dogs, utterly regardless of the presence of the hunter."

A Book of the Week.

"MARCELLA."*

DURING the last fortnight, the daily and weekly papers have been full of reviews of Mrs. Humphrey Ward's new novel. The book has been looked for with the greatest interest; and, according to many of the most competent critics, is by far the most interesting of all Mrs. Ward's writings. "Marcella" has been criticised from almost every point of view, and many of the most distinguished writers have pronounced their verdict upon it both in private and in the columns of the newspapers. Those who want a learned dissertation on its ethics, politics, and sociology, can

*"Marcella." By Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Three Volumes. (Smith, Elder & Co., London. 1894.)

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