

so in contemplating the profits of the business. One grower expressed himself on this subject in this wise: "A steer eats sixty pounds of alfalfa a day, an ostrich ten pounds. A steer at five years old is worth \$50 and an ostrich \$250. There is nothing to the steer but meat. At ten months the ostrich will produce \$10 worth of feathers, and thereafter from \$30 to \$100 worth of feathers annually. Beyond this, you have the value of the ostrich and of the increase."

Feathers vary greatly in value, some running up in their raw state to \$200 a pound. The female has a few white plumes, but her drab feathers are of little value. In each wing are about twenty-five feather sockets, from which the greater part of the "crop" is clipped. About a pound of feathers is expected from each male at each eight-months' plucking. Feathers have been exchanged between Arizona and South Africa, and the result of the comparison is a pleasing one. In acknowledging receipt of some Arizona feathers, a South African expert wrote, "They are better than anything we raise here." Yet the samples, intentionally, had been selected from ordinary stock, not from the best. Birds on alfalfa, in the mild climate of Arizona, undoubtedly have finer plumage than those ordinarily plucked on the African veldts.

In South Africa it is a felony to attempt to ship out an ostrich,—a gentle statute that suggests there must be some money in the industry. About 400,000 birds are now under private ownership there, and \$7,000,000 worth of raw feathers annually are exported, mainly through one market at Port Elizabeth.

The birds are ever a curious study. They lack sensory nerves, and seem immune to physical pain. One bird near Phoenix appears to mind little the loss of one side of his head, with one eye and part of the brain, all kicked off by another cock. The flesh was pulled over the wound by a keeper, and nature did the rest.

DOESN'T HIDE HIS HEAD IN THE SAND.

All foolishness is that ancient tale of how the spent ostrich finds fancied safety by sticking its head into the sand. It belongs to the same classification in natural history as the time-honored method of catching birds by salting their tails. Nor is their speed so great as has been assumed. For a short time an ostrich can run at the rate of a mile every two minutes, stepping thirty feet at a stride, and he can dodge like a college team quarter-back, turning at right angles when in full flight. But his lungs are too small for long-sustained effort of this sort.

Considered individually, not to say personally, the ostrich is somewhat like the earth in general. As a whole he is not beautiful, but he has beauty around his equatorial region. Neck and legs are as bare as any arctic expanse. All the shrubbery, so to speak, has been stuck on amidships. On the whole, he is an uncanny bird, without the canniness of a turkey or the instinct of a chicken, and with only a tablespoonful of brain. He is a feathered Ishmaelite, with a cantankerous disposition and a telescopic eye that hunts trouble afar,—an oddity in a class by himself.

Verily, the ostrich, of whatever size or years, looks as though he belonged to a bygone geologic period, contemporary with the pterodactyl and its ilk. His neck is snaky, with its odd esophagus that seems to coil over the vertebrae. Some of his notes have a snake-like hiss. Yet, forsooth, he is a bird, because of his feathers, wings and a pair of legs. But, let it be known, Prof. William C. Beebe, of New York Zoological Park, has discovered in the embryo of the ostrich a striking similarity to the rudimentary saurian, and through study of the eggs of both is said to have found strong proof of the common origin of bird and reptile. In the ostrich embryo have been found even rudimentary fingers or flippers. You have read of winged serpents, and, on the authority of well-beloved folk tales, the dragon of old was an aerial sort of reptile. Possibly, it is just as well that the ostrich of today cannot fly.

Though ostrich meat is good to eat, and ostrich eggs are fine, the latest market quotations on both meat and fresh eggs forbid a large consumption till ostrich-raising has advanced to the point

where the Belgian hare industry declined. President Roosevelt missed a treat, a few years ago, in not coming to Phoenix in the course of one of his western trips. Arrangements had been made to serve him a baked ostrich, with a side dish of scrambled ostrich egg. A young ostrich, weighing not over 200 pounds, is toothsome eating. The eggs taste much like hen eggs, and are quite palatable, though each is equal to from fifteen to twenty-five hen eggs. In passing, it might be told that one of the local farms lately received a request from an eastern woman for an ostrich egg. She wrote that she "wished to set it under a hen." Just imagine some long-suffering hen trying to incubate a football!

A beneficent tariff emphasizes the fact that ostrich feathers are a luxury, by an ad valorem schedule, which calls for 15 per cent. on imported raw feathers and 50 per cent. on completed plumes,—a difference which suggests a far cry and much labor between the bird and the hat.

HARVESTING THE FEATHER CROP.

This labor begins from the time when the first crop of feathers is to be harvested. Mature ostriches are not easy to manage, but the work is simplified by throwing a hood over the head of the victim, which, being rendered sightless, becomes reasonably docile. Once removed from the bird, the feather is put through a process which gives it the superb finish seen when it crowns the head of Lady Beautiful.

Nothing is more dainty than a feather plucked from the wing of the wild wanderer of the desert. There can be no reasonable doubt that among the first ornaments of the unevolved savage was an ostrich feather. Chiefest is the ostrich plume among the ornaments enhancing beauty. As long as beauty is appreciated, so long will the ostrich plume wave.

The Morning Ride.

Each morn I mount my dusky steed,
Matchless of strength, endurance, speed,
And then to Care I say good-bye,
As o'er the road we swiftly fly:
Black Harry and I.

Over the fences, swift as light,
Over the fields, like shades of night;
Over the meadows, and far away,
Onward to meet the breaking day:
Black Harry and I.

Then into a woodland's dusky bowers,
Drenched with the dewdrops' sparkling showers
Where lingers yet the deep twilight—
Putting a check on our arrow-flight:
Black Harry and I.

Across a brooklet, purling low,
Beside a river's stately flow,
Skimming along the grassy bank,
Where stand the willows, rank on rank:
Black Harry and I.

Through meadows fair we gallop on,
Steep'd in the light of rosy dawn:
O'er ditch and wall and granite ledge,
Past house and barn, through wayside hedge:
Black Harry and I.

With flashing eyes and flowing mane,
Spurning the ground with fierce disdain;
With tireless muscles playing fast
We skim the ground like North Wind's blast:
Black Harry and I.

With dainty tread we skirt a bog,—
Then onward like the Whippet dog:
No match has he, my noble horse,
When stretched upon his morning course:
Black Harry and I.

I'd match him 'gainst the swift red deer,
Without the slightest doubt or fear:
I'd match him 'gainst the Thoroughbred,
For well I know we'd be ahead:
Black Harry and I.

Then home we turn with joyous stride,
Care free after the morning ride:
My noble horse's work is done,
But mine, alas! has just begun:
Black Harry and I.

—Mildred I. Bourlet.

"A good wife can make a veritable angel of a man."
"Yes, that's so," old Brown agreed.
"My wife came near making one of me with her first batch of doughnuts."

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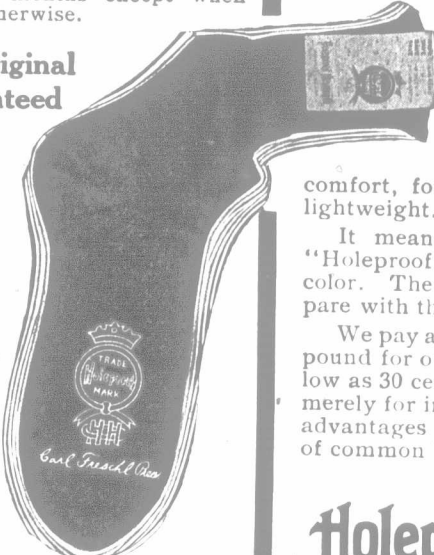
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