

# OSTRICH FARMS

HOW FOUR HUNDRED TAME BIRDS  
BRING IN \$7,000,000.00 PER ANNUM

Special Correspondence.

**PORT ELIZABETH.**—This is the chief ostrich feather port of the world. The finest plumes which decorate the hats of our American beauties are raised in Cape Colony, and more than \$500,000 worth of them were seen from Port Elizabeth to the United States last year. The most of the ostrich feathers used by man are now raised on the farms at Cape colony. There are something like 400,000 birds engaged in the business, and they produced more than a million pounds of feathers last year. Those feathers sold for more than \$7,000,000, bringing from \$10 to \$150 per pound.

## A BIG FEATHER MARKET.

The chief ostrich feather market is Port Elizabeth. The feathers are sent in by the farmers and country merchants and are sold here at auction, which are held every two weeks. They are carefully packed in boxes and sealed before shipment, and are consigned to licensed agents who sort them and sell on a commission of 2 1/2 per cent. The sorting is done at so much per pound.

The auction sales here are held in what is known as the feather warehouse. This covers more than an acre, and it consists of a great room filled with trestle work tables. Upon these tables the feathers are laid out in lots, and the feather buyers from all parts of the world look over them and bid on each lot as it is put up for sale. Sometimes a hundred thousand dollars' worth of feathers are displayed at one time, and the yearly auctions bring in several millions. After buying the feathers are resorted and then shipped to New York, and to London and other cities of Europe. The greater part of the product goes to London, where there are great feather auctions held several times every year. Some of the very best plumes, however, are exported direct to the United States, where they are sold at auction, and the resorting and finishing of them being done by our milliners and dealers at home. The poorest feathers go to Germany, where they are made up into hats and plumes for dolls' heads. The London feathers are resorted before they are sold, the auctions there handling 20 or 30 tons every two months. The average price brought by the Cape Colony feathers last year was over \$12 per pound.

## SCIENTIFIC OSTRICH REARING.

The business of ostrich raising is fast becoming a science. The government here is interested in it, and it has all sorts of laws to protect the farmers. There is a government veterinary surgeon at Port Elizabeth, who spends all his time studying ostrich diseases. There is an ostrich breeding association, and this has a book, in which the pedigrees of the most noted birds are laid down. There are certain farmers who have so improved their stock that their ostrich chicks will bring from \$500 to \$1,000 apiece, and certain cock birds will sell for \$5,000 or more. There is a man named Evans whose ostriches stand very high. He imported a Barbary cock some 25 years ago, and bred him to a fine native hen. Since then he has steadily improved his breed. The ostrich farmers pay great attention to the study of the feathers, watching the birds which produce the best, and crossing them with others, trying to breed the best, and the result is that the ostrich feathers which will yield the finest and most valuable plumes. There are certain localities which produce better feathers than others. The Outdushorn feather, for instance, reaches 29 and 30 inches in length, the Giff Roinet measures about 22 inches and the Middleburg is about 22. The latter feathers are about half an inch better than the Outdushorn as to certain points, but all are especially fine.

## KEPT LIKE PINK STOCK.

Within the past few years there has been a great change in ostrich

farming. A generation or so ago nearly all our feathers came from wild birds. They were hunted with dogs and guns, and were often captured in pitfalls. Then along about 50 years ago some ostriches were tamed. A South African and ostrich breeding began. As far back as 1865 there were only eight tame ostriches in the world. A few years later the custom of taming them began. In 1875 the number of tame birds here had increased to over 20,000. Still later came the great ostrich boom, and in 1882 the feathers were sold at \$200 and upward a pound, and people came from everywhere to South Africa to engage in the business of producing them. At that time the average price of a pair of birds was \$750, and some sold for \$1,000 and more. Only about half as many ostrich feathers were then exported as now, and they sold for more than \$5,000,000.

## As the business increased the farmers learned how to raise ostriches on less and less land. At the start the birds were allowed to run in camps of from 2,000 to 3,000 acres, and 20 acres was allowed for each. This is still the case on the great plateaus, known as the Karoo, but there are now farms about Outdushorn, and elsewhere, where two ostriches are kept on one acre, and where they are fed like fine stock, so much grass and other food being allowed to each per day.

## FED ON ALFALFA.

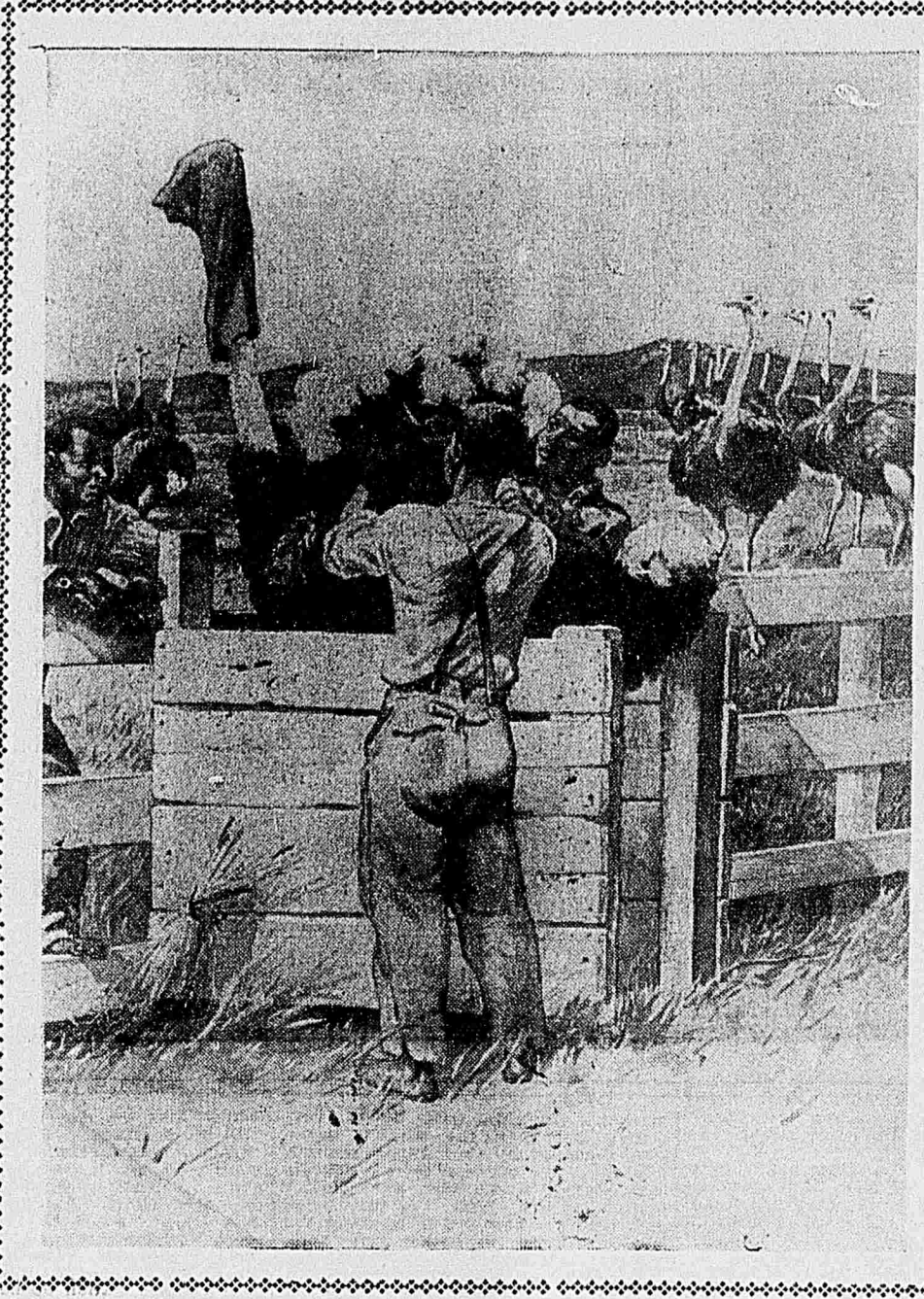
It has been recently found that a great deal of money can be made in raising ostriches on alfalfa or lucern, and especially so where that crop can be raised on irrigated lands. I have estimates showing that five ostriches have been kept in this way on one acre, and that they have yielded feathers to the amount of \$25 or \$35 per ostrich per year. This means that one acre of land brings in something like \$150 or more per annum, and that from 50 acres a man can make from \$5,000 to \$3,000 per year.

On all such farms the ostriches are kept in small fields. The usual paddock is an acre with a wire fence about it, and the fields are separated by paths three feet or more wide to prevent the birds fighting and kicking one another. Two birds, a cock and a hen, are kept in each paddock, and one acre of alfalfa amply suffices for their grazing the year around. Some of the farmers cut and stack the crop and then feed it to the ostriches when other food is short, and some let the birds graze. Alfalfa and birds have blossier feathers than those fed upon wild grass and bristles. Their quills are heavier and they weigh more. They also break easily, and for this reason are not so much liked by the dealers as the plumes of the birds from the wild. Irrigated land is suitable for ostriches is fast increasing in value. I am told that the best now bring \$1,000 per acre.

## WILD OSTRICHES.

During my stay in Africa I have seen many wild ostriches. There are some in the Sahara. They live along the borders of the desert, and one sometimes sees the ostriches, with wings outstretched, swimming through the air, over the sand. I saw a few in the Sudan, and in Ondurman was able to buy the choicest of white plumes from the wild birds at about \$2 apiece. There are many ostriches in British East Africa, and Somaliland. All along the Uganda railroad, from the Indian ocean to Lake Victoria, they may be seen feeding upon the high plains. I understand that there are some in Abyssinia, and that the world is a wrong. In the Kalahari desert. The feathers of the wild birds are oily, and they have long quills. They are freer from bars and other blemishes than are the plumes from the tame birds, and they bring a higher price in the market. Down here in South Africa wild birds may not be caught, hunted or shot, and the man who takes wild ostrich eggs from any of the crown lands without

The Big Feather Market of Port Elizabeth—Scientific Ostrich Breeding and the South African Ostrich Stud Book—Feathers Made from Alfalfa—A Look at the Egyptian Ostriches and Those of the Sahara—Hatching by Incubators—How the Birds Are Bred on the Karoo—Ostrich Eggs and Chicks—How the Feathers Are Cut.



Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter. KAFIR BOYS PLUCKING THE FEATHERS.

a license is subject to a fine of \$100. The same penalty is attached to hunting or wounding a wild bird upon private lands without the owner's consent.

## EGYPTIAN OSTRICHES.

During my stay in Egypt I visited a large ostrich farm near Cairo. It has something like 2,000 birds, and the feathers are largely retailed to tourists. The farm lies on the edge of the desert not far from Heliopolis, where Plato taught school, and near the tree under which the Virgin Mary and the

Baby Jesus rested about nineteen hundred odd years ago. This farm is a large carved out of the desert. It is divided up into fields, which are surrounded by high mud walls. There are alleys in some of the fields, and you can walk over the farm, seeing ostriches of all ages,

sizes and sexes engaged in all the occupations of ostrich life. Some of the birds are eight feet in height and some are no bigger than Plymouth Rock hens. The male and female ostriches are kept in pairs, and usually there is one pair or more in each field. As I went through I shook my fist at one

lady ostrich, and her husband got angry. The neck, head and legs of the old cock turned as red as blood, and he snapped at me with his bill like an angry dog. He tramped up and down the pen, lifting his big two-toed hoofs high, an dthe turbaned Egyptian who went with me told me that a knock from him would kill a horse or knock my head from my shoulders.

## HATCHING BY INCUBATORS.

It was on the Egyptian farm that I first saw ostriches hatched in incubators. The farmer told me that the eggs were taken from the nest every day, leaving one for a nest log just as we do for chickens. About 20 eggs are allowed to each pair of ostriches when setting, and the balance of the forty-odd eggs, which the hen lays, goes in the incubators. I saw several hundred eggs. Each was as big as the head of a six-month-old baby. It was of a smooth ivory white, freckled over with little black specks.

In the incubators the eggs are laid in padded boxes and are kept in a room where the temperature is just about 100 degrees Fahrenheit. As the time for hatching approaches they are tested day after day by placing them in a hole in the wall of a dark room. This hole just fits the egg, so that the light shines through and shows its condition. The light comes through the shell. If it is there will be only light at the larger end, where the air chamber is.

The eggs are turned every day, and when the chicks are just about ready to hatch the shells are broken with a tack hammer. The baby ostriches are then taken out and laid away for 24 hours in boxes of warm cotton. Before going further they have their eyes tested, and if they are lightish in color they are killed, for the light-eyed ones are albinos and are of no good for laying.

The most of the farmers of South Africa now use incubators, but many let the birds hatch their own eggs, and on nearly all the large farms you may see these great creatures sitting on the nests which they have dug out of the sand. The breeding season begins in June and lasts until the end of September, but if the birds are well fed they will continue to breed all the year around. As the time for breeding approaches the breeders are camped off in pairs, a field of six acres or less being given to each cock and hen. The fields are often separated by double fences, as the cock ostriches are very jealous when their mistresses are laying and they will fight one another and often break their legs in their attempts to kick through the wires.

The cock always picks out the place for the nest. He then kneels down on his breast bone and kicks out a round dish-shaped hollow in the sand. When it is fixed to his satisfaction he coaxes the hen ostrich to it and gives her instructions to lay. If satisfied she goes to work and lays one egg every other day for about 20 days. She may then take a rest, and begin to lay again, keeping on until she has laid 40 or more. When she thinks she has enough she begins to set and here the old cock comes again on the job. He sets on the eggs fully half of the time, and as a rule, takes charge of them at night. If the hen stays off too long he grows angry and drives her back to the nest. At the end of 42 days the eggs are ready for hatching and the chicks begin to kick their way out. In this the cock often assists them by breaking the shells with his breast bone and the farmers sometimes go from nest to nest and gently tap or crack the shells, so that the chicks may break them apart. The chicks, when first born, are dead little things with feathers of the downy nature of a chicken just hatching. They are as big as a full-grown hen, and seem to be all eyes and neck. They waddle about like little ducklings

and are very delicate. Here in South Africa they are often kept away from their parents at night, being placed in packing cases which are floored with dry sand and covered with burlap. After they are two or three months old they are allowed to sleep together on the floor of a warm room and after six months they can run about and will stand almost as much cold as the old birds. They grow fast. At the age of a month they are as big as a turkey, and at seven or nine months their first picking begins.

Harvesting the ostrich feathers goes by the general name of plucking. This gives one the idea that the plumes are pulled out. This is not so. Such treatment would cause great pain and in the process of plucking the quills are called clipping or cutting, for the quills are snipped off with shears; and this causes the ostriches just about as much pain as shearing does sheep. The first feathers of a chick bring but little more than the second. The quills of the full-grown male birds are the most valuable, and it makes a great difference in their value as to how the feathers are cut. There are 25 long white plumes on each wing of a male. The rest of the feathers are black on the male and drab or grayish on the female. In addition there are smaller feathers known as the ostrich tips and others, so that one bird will yield about 300 at a plucking. After 24 feathers are taken off they are carried indoors and sorted into about 20 different lengths and colors. They are then tied up in bundles, weighed and packed up for the market. The cheap tips bring something like \$5 a pound, while the plumes from the wings and tails are worth \$200 per pound and upward.

## BLINDFOLDED OSTRICHES.

Plucking an ostrich is no easy matter. I would rather tackle a mad bull than one of these great birds. If I had no means of defense, the only thing I could do is to run. The ostrich is a very cowardly bird, and a cock is afraid of a thorn bush, and this only because he fears it may put out his eyes. Without that he might run at you and kick you to death. The ostrich kicks high, and the best remedy in such cases is to throw yourself flat on the ground. Then the old cock may kneel on you and squeeze you, but he cannot kick so as to hurt.

At the time for plucking the ostriches are driven by the farmers or the native blacks into plucking boxes. These are little pens made for the purpose. They are just about large enough for one ostrich to stand in without moving round. After the door is shut the bird can do nothing, and he cannot kick, as the sides are too high. He is kept quiet by means of a stocking or a great cloth mitten which is drawn over his head. His wings are now raised, and the plumes cut off with scissors, the work going on until all the feathers are taken. The ostrich roars mournfully during the process, but in reality it hurts him but little. When tucked out he looks as ugly as a sheep after shearing, but within a few weeks the stumps of the quills die and fall out, and the new feathers begin to appear.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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## VIEW THE FLEET IN JAPAN

(Continued from page seventeen.)

Joyous source of fun to him. The Japanese students liked him immensely, and he was always in the middle of a group of them being "welcomed" and entertained. On the second day and the morning of the third were the ones on which he saw real life. This is how it came about. He was ordered to a reception given by Mr. Asano, president of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha. He had no idea how to go to find the place, and I couldn't tell him either. But as it was in Tokyo, we decided to go from Yokohama together. Now as luck would have it there were four foreigners in the car with us and they learned where he was ordered and as they were going the same way they took him along. These foreigners had a Japanese friend who was also going to the reception. Mr. Smith met him in true Japanese style while he was in Tokyo. Thus he got a chance to try a Japanese bath and Japanese food. He enjoyed it so much that he could talk of nothing else from then until leaving.

## IN AUTOMATIC AUTO.

Smith's host owned an auto and the next morning we saw Tokyo together in the machine. And we saw it too and still had time to do some shopping besides. If you want to imagine the primary cause of nervous prostration just try an auto ride in the narrow, crowded streets of Tokyo. Especially when the driver insists on going at a mile a minute rate. I can't tell you what we saw or where we went, only I know we went all right, and everybody we passed seemed to be running fast enough away from us to get out of the way so I don't think anyone was killed. All I know is that I hung on to the seat of the car as it was as I do when the dentist is tickling the nerve of my ugliest molar with his buzzer, and the sensation was about the same. I don't believe Smith saw anything either because he had to hold on too. But anyway we covered the ground and that is about all most tourists do. And as we were not arrested we got back to the hotel on time and the day was voted a howling success—it was howling all right. I've already put that auto ride on my

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list of experiences that are worth experiencing but I've also added the note, "never again for me."

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## SERMONS BOILED DOWN.

He cannot defend the truth who is afraid of any truth. He who has nothing to do always does worse than nothing. It takes adversity to show whether we have any real prosperity. Getting sore at the world is a ready way of laming yourself in the race. Trying to get even with an enemy is a sure way of sinking below him. The worst of all failures are those who never fail because they never try. The man who has nothing but devotion puts his headlight on the caboose. He who knows what forgiveness is, who is too lazy to resent a wrong. Many a man thinks he is a saint because he has dreams of heaven every Sunday. The man who talks to please himself loses the audience well pleased with itself. It's a waste of time to fix up your statistics for the benefit of the recording angel. There never was a church that went down except it had first failed to get down and serve men. Chicago Tribune.

## A HAIR'S BREADTH ESCAPE.

Do you know that every time you have a cough or cold and let it run on thinking it will just cure itself you are inviting pneumonia, consumption or some other pulmonary trouble? Don't risk it. Put your lungs back in perfect health and stop that cough with Ballard's Horehound Syrup. Price, 50c per bottle. Sold by Z. C. M. I. Drug Dept., 112 and 114 South Main St.

## SAVING THE ODD MOMENTS OF TIME.

Recently there was a rivalry among commuters in different parts of the country as to who had traveled the greatest number of miles going to and from home during the period of suburban residence, says the New York Herald. The palm was awarded to an Illinois man, whose aggregate equaled about 11 trips around the world. A man full of purpose and intent on achieving permits no time to pass unfruitfully. Rev. E. Beuchie has written so well of active life and primitive passions, did much of the work on the novel that gave him his distinction on railroad trains and streetcars, using not only notebooks but letters and any fragments of paper that might be utilized from what he carried in his pockets. The writer recalls that on the way to a Democratic national convention in Kansas City Samuel Untermyer, eminent corporation lawyer, carried with him the documents in a complex case of stupendous importance and in the intervals between smokes and political chats with the rest of the Tammany leaders really figured out some of the most effective work of his career. Another distinguished lawyer, long and slender, was just as mindful of the minutes, though he lived not in the time of fast expresses and slower subway trains. Transportation, however, was not his only business. He was a great thinker, and the greatest loss took place right in his own home. The good gentleman was the Chancellor of Acadeseau, French jurist, who died in 1761.

It annoyed him that his wife always kept him waiting a quarter of an hour after the dinner bell had been sounded. He estimated that in a month of week days seven and a half hours thus went for nothing. This waste was wasteful and to his thrifty French nature was wholly inexcusable. So he resolved to devote the time to writing a book on jurisprudence. How well he succeeded in putting this project into execution may be judged from the fact that in the course of time he produced four quarto volumes.

## ACHES AND PAINS.

You know by experience that the aches and pains of rheumatism are not permanent, but only temporarily, relieved by external remedies. Then why not use an internal remedy—Hood's Sarsaparil, which corrects the acidity of the blood on which rheumatism depends and cures the disease? This medicine has done more for the rheumatic than any other medicine in the world.

## EXCHANGE CHILDREN.

Among the oddities of European education at present is the exchange children system. Last year the Paris branch reported 146 exchanges affecting 222 children, an increase of 26 exchanges over 1906, and the greatest number of date. The plan is to have a boy or girl from a French family sent to Germany or England, where he or she becomes a member of a German or an English family. The latter in return sending a child to France who is taken in charge by the parents of the French child. Each family pays the traveling expenses of its own child and keeps it clothed. Nothing is paid for food, board or either side. The society pays all expenses of finding consenting families, of negotiating the exchange and of safeguarding the children in transit. The main purpose is set forth as being the restoration of knowledge of foreign tongues. Then every exchanged child, it is assumed, will take home a general impression of its foreign sojourn and will always have a kindly feeling for its hosts. By far the greater number of exchanges are for the school vacation season only. This, it is expected, may be made very general. Last year's exchanges were divided as follows: France-Germany, 105 cases; France-England, 30; France-Austria, 5; Germany-England, 1; Germany-Italy, 1. There are 20 boys and 52 girls exchanged. England furnished eight of the girls, Austria three, and the rest were French. The probable spread of the system is indicated by the fact that the society received altogether 3,500 tentative proposals for exchanges during the year. About 300 exchanges have been carried out since the society started—New York Sun.

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