

A FORTUNE IN OSTRICHES

Description of an Interesting California Industry.

How the Big Birds are Raised, and the Profit They Bring.

"Hello! what are you doing?" was asked yesterday of an old Cincinnati who was on 'Change, but who for several years has been a resident of Lower California.

"Got a new business. Lots of money in it. I am running an ostrich farm and have done so well that I'm thinking of importing a couple of hundred more birds from Cape Town."

"Where's the money?" "Why, in the feathers, man. They retail at several dollars a piece, and the demand for them is continually increasing, and will so long as women possess vanity."

"How many feathers will an ostrich yield?"

"That depends. Some of them as much as fifteen pounds at a clipping; others not more than three. The long, white plumes that the ladies all over the world prize so highly grow on the ends of the wings of the males. A good bird in his prime will yield from twenty to forty of these feathers, besides a few black feathers from the wings. The tail feathers are not so valuable or beautiful. The hen yields fine plumes from her wing tips, and they are generally spotted and flecked with gray, and are called feminines. Those which in the male birds are black are gray with her."

"They are sorted, I suppose?" "Oh yes, according to their quality and purity of color. The pure whites from the wings are called 'bloods,' the next quality 'prime whites,' 'firsts,' 'seconds' and so on. 'Bloods' bring from \$200 to \$250 a pound in the wholesale market, and then from this figure run down as low as a few dollars to the pound."

"What are the birds worth?" "A healthy bird a week old is worth \$50; at three months, \$75; at six months, \$150. You can begin to pluck the feathers when the bird is a year old and they will yield about \$35 worth a piece."

"When do you pair them?" "Not until they are about five years old; then each pair yields about eight to twenty-four eggs each season. These pairs are kept in inclosures by themselves, because the males are very jealous and they take sudden fits and fight ferociously, frequently tearing each other's eyes out, pulling out feathers and sometimes breaking legs."

"Do they kick hard?" "Why, a blow from one of their legs has been known to break a man's leg, while the claw, above an inch long, of the front toe will tear the flesh from head to foot. The wound from this is said to be poisonous."

"How about raising young ostriches?" "That's done by hatching the eggs with an incubator. The chicks thrive and do well. Ostriches pair about the beginning of March and the female lays her eggs toward the end of April. Her nest is a hollow basin that she scrapes out of the sand. She lays about two dozen eggs and arranges them in the nest in the form of a triangle, with the point in front of her. Some of the eggs do not get hatched, and these she breaks to feed to the young ones that are hatched for the first few weeks they are out of their shell. It takes six weeks to hatch the young birds and in three years they attain their full size. They live a great deal together, and it is not uncommon to see the nest of a large family together, the grandfather and grandmother in the middle and the younger generations gathered round about."

"What do you feed these young ostriches hatched out by the incubators?"

The principal food is lucerne and thistles and herbs that grow in the country. Old birds will feed on mature shrubs and plants, the leaves of which they will strip off with their beaks. They are also fed on Indian corn, of which they are very fond. "Are they vicious when breeding?" "Yes; especially the male, which has been known to attack and kill a man. They are a fearless animal at such times. When the female leaves the nest the male sits upon the eggs and while she is sitting he walks about in a lordly manner in order that no harm may come."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

The Farmer's Regret.

An Iowa farmer who recently fell into the clutches of a lightning rod-man, remarked to a neighbor a day or two afterward:

"Bill, I wish I'd been struck by the lightning itself before I saw that chap."

"Why so, John?"

"I'd a got off right smart easier."—Chicago Ledger.

The Culprit Cadets.

A cadet has been writing his reminiscences of military life at West Point, for the New York Sun. He winds up with this good story:

One beautiful June morning during examination days all the cadets, except those under fire from the academic board, were in their quarters. Two of them occupying a room in the third division overlooking the plain, were engaged in a discussion as to the probability of an inspection of quarters that morning. They finally agreed, as it was examination time, no inspection would take place, and accordingly blankets and pillows were thrown on the floor, the uncomfortable dress coats were cast aside, and uniform trousers soon followed suit. Pipes were lighted, and all necessary arrangements for the passing of a hot morning comfortably were consummated. So busily were they engaged in conversation that they did not hear the tap of the inspecting officer on the doors of the rooms near their own. Suddenly a sharp rap came upon the door, which opened to admit, not the company's regular inspecting officer, but the commandant of cadets himself, accompanied by no less an august personage than Gen. Buell. Both cadets from force of habit sprang to their feet and stood at attention, only wishing that the floor might open and swallow them. One was dressed in a shirt and a single sock, in which costume he had one sock the better of his comrade. The pipes had been hurriedly thrown under the clothes press, but the tell-tale smoke was wreathing their heads in rings. Gen. Buell was, at best, a solemn looking, taciturn man, but on this occasion he had hard work to preserve his dignity. The commandant was furious, and took pains to impress upon the General that one of the culprits had once been suspended from the Academy, and that the other was by no means an angel. The next day separate reports for smoking, not being in full dress during call to quarters, and for having bedding on the floor were made out in the commandant's name against each offender.

Tackling a Devil Fish.

Some years ago some devil fish appeared in a harbor where several schooners were lying, and the sailors, who were Swedes and had never seen one of the fish before, saw them playing around in the harbor, and thought it would be a good joke to spear one. So they took a light skiff and a pair of old whale harpoons and ropes that belonged to schooner and started out, and were joined by the other boats. In a short time one of the boats got alongside of a sea-bat, and a rouser it was, too. When they struck it you'd have thought the whole bottom had been hit, and a second later that boat was rushing up the harbor at a rate she had never went before. It was a blind lead, though, and the fish had to turn, and the skiff was jerked around so quickly that she half filled, and one man was tumbled overboard.

Up the channel they went, some yelling for the boat and others to cut the line as it was evident that she would fill in a moment; but it happened that the only man who had a knife had been dropped overboard, and as they couldn't get the line untied, they had to let it go. They said afterward they were about to jump overboard and let everything go, when the fish changed its course and headed right for one of the schooners. They had to jump then, anyhow, and, as they went overboard, the fish dived under the vessel, and the skiff struck her side with a crash, and was knocked all to pieces. The end plank, as they found out later, to which the line was made fast, went off with the fish. The men were picked up, and two days later the devil fish floated ashore. It measured eighteen feet across, and was estimated to weigh a ton.—New York Sun.

"What Are We Here For."

The member from Calabash was disgusted with the manner in which time had already been wasted without electing a Senator; and rising slowly to his feet with majestic dignity, his piercing eye swept the assembly with a withering look, as he thrust one hand in the bosom of his coat, waved the other high in the air, raised himself on tiptoes, and in tones of exalted pitch that startled every drowsy member, thundered out: "In heaven's name, Mr. Speaker, what are we here for?"

The little man from Blossom County, who was doubled up in his seat writing a letter to his wife, opened out like a spring jackknife, and stood on his pins in an instant, with both hands jabbed into his pockets to the elbows as he answered the conundrum with his usual bluntness:

"Six dollars a day a d' milled!"—Chicago Ledger.

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