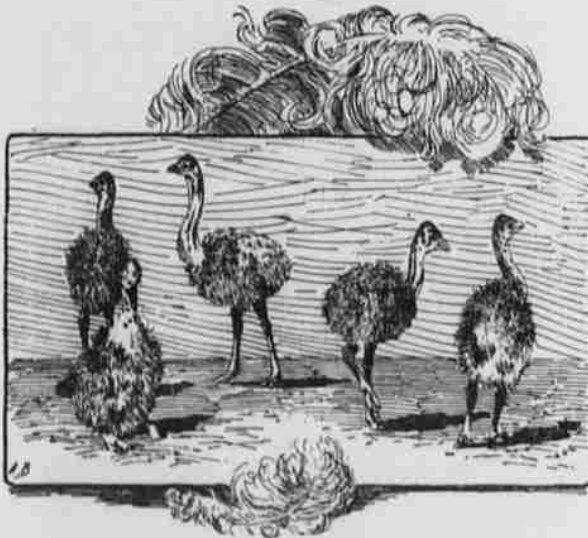


OSTRICH FARMING IN CALIFORNIA.

Among the many industries transplanted to southern California from other climes, that of ostrich growing is proving highly successful. Dr. Sketchley was the first to import birds from Africa, he bringing over twenty in 1882. The same year a company of eastern gentlemen formed the American Ostrich company with C. F. A. Johnson, of Maine, as president, and his son, E. J. Johnson, manager. The latter gentleman proceeded at once to Africa, where he spent a year in the practical study of the care of ostriches, not only giving all his time to the work, but paying for his experience besides. He then purchased twenty-one birds and shipped them by sailing vessel to New Orleans. The birds, weighing from 200 to 250 lbs. each, were confined in separate movable box-stalls, and the voyage of sixty-six days was an extremely trying one. They landed in December, 1883, without loss of life, and were sent by rail to San Diego; but the journey, which was unfortunate in many respects, came near proving fatal to the ostriches, and several subsequently died from the effects.

They were located on an eighty-acre ranch near Fallbrook, San Diego county. In the beginning were many discouraging difficulties not anticipated, but these have been overcome, and the business now ranks with the profitable industries of the Pacific coast. Change of climate, coyotes, wire fences and other causes have reduced the original herd one-half, and as ostriches do not as a rule breed until four years old, it is only within the last two years that there has been an increase from the native birds; consequently the growth of



YOUNG OSTRICHES.

the herd has necessarily been slow. The whole number in this herd is now 130 of all ages.

Large fortunes were made in Africa in a few years from the sale of feathers previous to 1882, but since the establishment of the industry in California, the feather market has been very much depressed, prices dropping fifty to seventy-five per cent. Now, however, they are in greater demand than for years, and every grade sells, prices reaching as high as \$150 per pound for raw feathers.

The American Ostrich company's feathers are shipped to New York for dressing and manufacturing into tips, plumes, boas, trimmings, etc., and returned to them at San Diego, where they are sold, principally from the ostrich exhibit at Coronado beach. In their finished state, prices range from \$25 to \$300 per pound.

The expense of keeping the birds, for food alone, is estimated by this company to be not more than \$6 a year each, and one faithful attendant can feed and care for a hundred birds. Plucking is done when the feathers are ripe, usually every nine months, by two men who catch the ostrich and blind it by quickly drawing a stocking over its head, when it is comparatively manageable, and is placed in a narrow stall until the operation is performed. The larger feathers are then clipped off and placed in a basket. Thus far the bird has offered little resistance, but after the plumes are secured the quills must be removed. This gives the poor ostrich pain, which he resents by a frantic effort to kick his tormentors. Being blindfolded, however, and able only to kick forward, the skillful pluckers generally succeed in avoiding danger. A singular accident occurred at Fallbrook recently, by which a fine

bird lost her life while being plucked. Becoming excited, she in some way got her head through a crack in the wall, and in her struggles, broke her neck before she could be freed. As full grown birds are valued at \$1,000 a pair, it will readily be seen that such a loss is not unimportant. The choice feathers come only from the wings, which are of themselves beautiful feather fans, edged with long, bending white plumes. The tail also contains some fine feathers, though not comparable with those of the wings. A single bird rarely furnishes more than 2 dozen really fine plumes, as many are spoiled by wear and must be worked up in the cheaper grades.

Each pair of birds is kept in its own enclosure of about an acre. The nests are simply hollows in the sand, four or five feet in diameter. The female will lay perhaps twenty-five eggs in succession, (one every second or third day) and with good care may have three laying periods in a year. If the birds are allowed to incubate, the male assists, one of them covering the egg at night, the other in the daytime; and it is said that if the female neglects her duty, her consort drives her to the nest. Hatching is done artificially, however, and owing to the great size of the eggs—one of them weighing three or four pounds—incubators must be made expressly for the purpose.

About seventy-five per cent. of the eggs hatch, the time required being six weeks. Those that prove sterile, after being in the incubator a few days, are "blown," and the shells sell readily at \$1.50 each. The young chicks are nearly as large as an ordinary hen and are at first very delicate, being about as difficult to raise as young turkeys. The old birds are not awkward, but the young ones have no sense whatever, and so it is necessary to remove the latter as soon as possible after they escape from the shell to prevent them from wandering into danger. It requires skillful coaxing and no little maneuvering to entice the fond parents from the nest, but this accomplished, the young ostriches are transferred to a sand box in the sun, where they must have close attention all day long to keep them from mishaps, which their utter lack of discretion and extreme awkwardness would certainly bring upon them. After three months they are considered comparatively safe. It is not known to what age they will live, but Mr. Johnson has seen those known to be seventy-five years old, and thinks they will reach a hundred.

The food consists of grain, vegetables of all kinds, (except potatoes,) alfalfa, etc., the favorite diet being cabbage and beets. They swallow all sorts of indigestible things, stones, glass, leather and pieces of tin, in case they can not obtain bones and shells, as something of this nature is necessary to digestion. Tourists amuse themselves by giving them whole oranges, one at a time, which are swallowed with avidity, and a number of them may be counted at once making comical protuberances at various distances down their long neck. These they afterwards work down at leisure.

The climate of Florida, and other points in the southern United States, has been tried, with a view to establishing ostrich farms, but in all cases proved complete failures, and there are now none outside of California, where there are six "plants," numbering in all about 500 birds, distributed as follows: Fullerton, 164; Fallbrook, 130; Norwalk, 70; Santa Barbara, 50; Santa Monica, 44; Red Bluff, 40. The climate of southern California has proved to be perfectly adapted to them, the native stock being vigorous and hardy, often excelling in size the imported birds, while the feathers are considered by experts to be of a superior quality and finer than those from Africa. The American Ostrich Co. now considers its work beyond the experimental stage and has its business well established, with flattering promise of continued success.

M. C. FREDERICK.

In all the Kootenai lake camps the age of uncertainty is passed, says an exchange. The shipment of ninety tons of ore from the Skyline last fall, with returns of about \$40,000, and 110 tons from the Silver King mine, with returns of \$35,000, has stamped these mines as rich ore producers. Many others show equally as rich prospects as these two. With the Canadian Pacific railway tapping the lake from the westward, the Nelson & Fort Sheppard from the south, and the Great Northern and probably the Northern Pacific reaching the navigable waters of the Kootenai river at Bonner's Ferry, a period of mining activity such as has rarely been seen in the northwest, is sure to be inaugurated during the summer.

The Rogue River Valley Water company is preparing to utilize some of the waters of the Butte creeks. The canal and reservoirs they propose to dig and operate will be used for both farms and factories. The intention is to construct a canal thirty miles long, with a width of twelve feet at the top and eight at the bottom, and the descent will give a 100-foot fall of water at Medford. Work will soon begin. This enterprise will greatly enliven business and increase the growth of the locality.