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X. STRUTHIO CAMELUS. - THE OSTRICH.

PLATE X.

STRUTHIO CAMELUS.—THE OSTRICH.

Volstrüys of the Cape Colonists.—*Neechey* of the Matabili and Bechuana.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Largest of all known birds. From seven to nine feet high at the crown of the head, and upwards of eight feet long. Body large and ponderous. Back angularly pitched, like the roof of a house. Wings short, unfit for flight, but covered with loose flexible feathers which form elegant bunches, and aid the animal's progress while running. Head small and flat. Bill sub-conic, depressed horizontally, of a horn color, and blunted at the end. Nostrils oval; surrounded by bristles. Eyes large and brilliant; irides hazel; lids fringed with lashes. Greater part of the head and neck nearly bald; of a dull flesh color, wrinkled, with a few scattered hairs. Feathers of the body lax, jet black, decomposite; the webs on each side the shaft equal. Quill and tail feathers snowy-white, long, waved and downy; the edges here and there margined with black. Chest callous, and shaped like a buckler. Thighs and flanks perfectly naked. Legs very elevated and robust. Tarsi scaly. Feet strong and heavy; of a grey flesh color. Toes two on each, connected at the base; the inner about eight inches long, the outer not more than four. Unarmed. Internally furnished with an enormous crop.

Female slighter; of a dirty umber brown complexion; otherwise similar. Gregarious, though often ranging in pairs. Still found in many parts of the Cape Colony. Extremely common throughout the interior, resorting chiefly to Karroos and arid plains.

CHAPTER X.

THE OSTRICH.

Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?
 Which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in the dust,
 And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.
 She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear.
 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.
 What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

FAMOUS from the most remote antiquity, and constituting in the chain of being, the link between the *Aves* and the *Mammalia*, the Ostrich—largest and least bird-like of all the feathered race—is distributed over the whole of Africa, from Egypt and Barbary to the Cape; wandering also through those portions of Asia which border upon that vast continent, and setting up the staff of habitual sojourn in the sandy deserts of Arabia. Herding in troops which consist of thirty, forty, or more individuals of both sexes, these giant birds inhabit the most sterile and desolate regions, commonly associating with the Quagga, or with Burchell's Zebra, their fellow tenants of the waste, for whose society it has already been remarked that they evince a singular predilection;—and uniformly frequenting the widest and most naked plains, where their towering heads are so far elevated above their four-footed companions, and above the surrounding country, as to admit of their discovering objects at a distance which renders them secure against the stealthy invasion of man, their hereditary foe. Prudent and circumspect, the Ostrich—in Southern Africa at least—betrays none of that stupidity with which the species has been taxed by Naturalists; and, if decreed to remain upon the earth by being denied the faculty which is the eminent prerogative of its class—it has nevertheless received in compensation, a fleetness of foot, imparting that force and rapidity in the race, which enables it to outstrip with ease, every other animal in the creation.

Aristotle pronounced the Ostrich to be of an equivocal nature, *part bird, part quadruped*, and, as well in external character as in internal structure, it undoubtedly presents numerous peculiarities by which it closely approximates to the beasts. Viewed as a member of the feathered creation, its dimensions are perfectly astounding—the cock not unfrequently attaining the enormous height of nine feet at the crown of the head, and actually weighing from one to three hundred pounds—whilst the muscular thigh alone, is superior in point of size to the largest leg of mutton. Unlike other birds, its tongue is short, and moulded in the form of a horse-shoe; the sternum, instead of being shaped in the usual manner like the keel of a vessel, rather resembling a broad cuirass. This callous breast-place, covered with an extremely thick skin, forms no contemptible defensive armour, and is particularly favorable to the motions of the bird, in all its up-risings and down-sittings, these manœuvres being performed much after the fashion of the dromedary, to which animal, the length of the bird's legs, as well as of its neck, combined with its singular habits, have caused it to be aptly compared. The *Strouthos* of the Greeks, as well as the *Struthio Camelus* of the Latins, have both been derived from this analogy of feature, which has even given rise amongst the people of Persia and Arabia, to a vulgar belief that the *Shutur-moorg** is produced by the union of a camel with a bird!

So easily is the Ostrich satisfied in regard to water, that it is constantly to be found in arid and desolate tracts, which have been long abandoned both by antelopes and beasts of prey—a circumstance which has given rise to another absurd tradition amongst the Arabs and Hottentots that it never drinks at all, but even avoids those places in which water is to be found. Inhabiting parched and burning climes, which are seldom refreshed by rain—vast deserts of naked sand, equal in extent to the entire dominions of European Sovereigns, but affording neither “green herb nor limpid stream”—this bird, like its prototype the camel, may, in its wild state, frequently pass several days without drinking; yet in refutation of the charge of hydrophobia, it is well known to have no difficulty, when domesticated, in disposing of a gallon of liquid daily. Naturally herbivorous, it feeds principally on the tops of heather, and of various shrubby plants, which even the most barren parts of Africa produce in sufficient abundance, but which would not appear to contain more moisture than an old worn out broom. So voracious is this bird, however, and so obtuse are its senses of taste and smell, that, although vegetable matter constitutes the basis of its diet, it will devour animal and mineral substances indiscriminately, until its enormous stomach can absolutely hold no more. Without any choice, and merely, as it were, to serve for ballast, it swallows in succession, stones, wood, glass, iron, copper, gold, leather, quick-lime, or any substance in fact which comes in its way, however hard, indigestible, and usually deleterious it may be. Hence the showman's story that the *running* ostrich feeds entirely upon iron; for pieces of this metal have actually been found in its stomach, greatly worn down by trituration with other hard bodies, and even eaten into, in parts, by the gastric fluid. Nevertheless the digestive powers are confined to matter of an alimentary character; nails not unfrequently

* Anglicé. The Camel-Bird.

piercing the coats and membranes of the stomach; and copper, far from being converted into nutriment, acting upon it like poison. Nearly a pound weight of stone, metals, and coins, half worn down, were discovered by M. Cuvier in the body of an individual that died in the French menagerie, which during its captivity had preferred barley to any other aliment, disposing of four pounds daily, with a pound of bread, and sundry heads of lettuce.*

Those of the Dutch Colonists who resided on the borders of the Karroo and other remote districts of the Cape, formerly made the chase of the *Volstrüys* one of their principal and most profitable occupations. As they destroyed them at all times of the year however, without any regard to the breeding seasons, their numbers are now greatly brought down, and in a few years the race will probably be altogether extirpated within the boundaries.

From the earliest times this noble bird has been held up to derision as the emblem of stupidity, and amongst many other ill-natured jokes cut at his expense, it has been maliciously asserted of him, that when he has hidden his own head in the sand, he foolishly believes himself to be screened from the gaze of his ruthless pursuers. Although, to withdraw itself from danger, the Ostrich has uniformly recourse to flight, yet when reluctantly forced to defend itself, it will break a man's arm or leg with a single kick, striking violently also with its bill and the spinous appendages of the wings. The sound produced by a blow of the scaly foot against a board, is not less than would be produced by a horse's hoof, or by a hammer; and Pliny even went so far as to declare that the bird possessed the faculty of casting large stones behind it at its pursuers!

In Southern Africa the voice of this bird, which by the sacred writers has been compared to the bellowing of a bull, is seldom heard, except during the season of incubation, when the *brommel*—as the grumbling sound emitted by the cock is termed by the Hottentots—although less prolonged, might almost be mistaken for the roar of the Lion; when brought to bay, however, the bird does little more than hiss like a gander. Notwithstanding the decided predilection of the Ostrich for liberty, adults taken alive are easily tamed, and will suffer themselves to be parked up in flocks. If captured young, they become extremely docile, and may even be left at liberty to go out of the farm-yard at pleasure, in search of food; but their voracity is greatly complained of, as they frequently evince an ogre-like inclination for swallowing young chickens alive, after having demolished the hens by trampling them underfoot. Many will suffer themselves to be ridden, and might doubtless be brought to carry burthens, and rendered otherwise serviceable to mankind; but although its vigour is said by authors to be so surprising that when mounted by two negroes it will run faster than the best English horse, no attempt has yet been made to apply such wonderful speed and strength to any purpose of practical utility. The exercise of bestriding the Ostrich at speed is represented by the same authorities to be so distressing that the rider must be habituated to it by degrees in order to prevent its producing suffocation.

If cloudless skies and continual sunshine be favourable to human happiness, the wretched people of Southern Africa might be supposed to enjoy it in a high degree of perfection. For days together, rarely does it happen that the azure field above is blotted or blemished by even the smallest speck; or that a single cloud is visible in the spacious vault of heaven. Certain tracts, of which these strange birds are the undisputed lords—unlike the sandy deserts of Arabia, consist of a hard gravelly soil of indurated clay, much impregnated with saltpetre, and sprinkled over with heath, and with black sickly-looking shrubs. Extensive sterile plains of a brownish yellow hue, displaying neither eminence nor hollow, are on all sides expanded to the view, so that without any great effort of imagination, the spectator might fancy himself standing in the very centre of the universe. No object meets the straining eye but a solitary vulture soaring with motionless pinions in the blue firmament, or an Ostrich standing out in bold relief against the distant horizon—either mounted on its stilts and pecking the tops of stunted and sun-scorched shrubs, or striding at a racing pace over boundless flats, variegated in parts with tufts of grass, whiter than mown hay. Occasionally the sameness of the scene may be varied by a wide-stretching, surge-like undulation—hill following hill, and hollow succeeding hollow with the same regularity as the billows of the ocean, for whole miles together; and at last, peradventure, a range of blue mountains, hazy and indistinct, starts up to bound the prospect; but still, over the wide desolation of the stony waste, not a tree can be descried, and the only impression left upon the mind is, that of utter and hopeless sterility. 'Tis

A region of emptiness, howling and drear,
Which man hath abandoned from famine and fear;
Which the ostrich and lizard inhabit alone,
With the twilight bat from the old hollow stone;
Where grass, nor herb, nor shrub take root,
Save poisonous thorns that pierce the foot;
And the bitter-melon for food and drink,
Is the pilgrim's fare by the salt-lake's brink!
A region of drought where no river glides,
Nor rippling brook with osier'd sides—
With no reedy pool nor mossy fountain,
Nor shady tree, nor cloud capp'd mountain.

In my own imagination, the idea of sterility is quite inseparable from the abode of the Ostrich; yet no African landscape can be considered complete without a group of these birds, and they are frequently to be seen in the greenest parts of the country. Observing them for the first time, pasturing after the fashion of a flock of geese, the stranger might easily believe that he beheld a herd of white or black cattle, according as the tails or heads were turned towards him. Many a time have I seen a solitary coal-black cock, looming as large as an ox, standing phlegmatically by himself, in the most exposed

* Griffiths' Transl.

situation—the sun's rays pouring perpendicularly upon his bald pate, but he appearing most enviably regardless of the heat, drought, and desolation that surround him. I have already elsewhere remarked, that amidst the vast assemblage of wild beasts frequently found congregated in the vicinity of water, a knot of stately Ostriches bedizened with their showy plumes, sometimes enact the part of General officers and staff with such grave propriety, as almost to impress the spectator with a belief that he is witnessing a review on Hounslow Heath. But of the many wild scenes exhibited by Dame Nature on her African theatre, there is none wilder—no, not one more engrossing, than a fleet of these giant birds crowding all sail, their towering masts raking gallantly, with every stitch of canvas bellying to the breeze, as, like ships on the desert, they are bearing down for some particular point in the ocean-like expanse, that has been previously determined by their sailing orders, and from which nothing can induce them to swerve.

The man who seeks to improve his acquaintance with the desert-loving Ostrich, will presently discover why it was that she was created with a long neck. Like many other wary animals, she will often suffer a waggon to approach very close before taking the alarm, and will sometimes even feign lameness to lure the hunter from her nest; but generally speaking, her great range of vision renders approach within moderate shot impossible, otherwise than upon horseback. Riding down an Ostrich dead on end, however, is a thing not to be mentioned, or even thought of—for without distress this bird can perform its three miles in rather less time than Flying Childers, and might put its tongue in its cheek at the *tyro* who essayed to catch it in a stern chase. "What time," says the inspired writer, "she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider." Yet even miserably mounted as we were, we could generally obtain a running shot at duelling distance whenever a steed could be afforded—the enormous bulk of the object rendering the odds rather against its escaping at such close quarters. Reader, suffer me to present yonder group of more than a dozen, of which you instantly make up your mind to despoil the largest, even though the doing so should cost you a favourite horse. They have already been peering over their shoulders at you for a considerable time past, and having apprehended your design, now raise their white plumed wings above their backs, and working them like paddles with a motion corresponding to that of the legs, are getting gently under way. No sooner do they perceive by your encreased pace that you are really in earnest, than letting on the steam, they begin to travel at a rate that beggars all description—moving their pillar-like legs with a rapidity that might make you believe they were skimming above the ground, did not their great heavy toes, make the dust and pebbles fly behind them, and create as much clatter as a horse in trotting. With their long, straight, slender necks reared high above the withered shrubs, like knobbed stakes in a hedge-row, and their delicate white plumes fluttering in the rude breeze of the desert—those snowy plumes which are destined perhaps some day to wave in Regal palaces above the marble brow of beauty—with long, hasty strides, oars and paddles going, here come "the running Ostriches," and in ten more seconds will cross the very path upon which from another direction, you are urging your panting courser to meet them. A noble cock is leading, in stature some yard or so loftier than yourself, and clad in a suit of deep mourning, his *sable* shroud surmounted by three bunches of nodding plumes, *argent*. Now you are nearly across his bows. Halt, as he luffs up in the wind to pass you—abandon your blowing steed, who, by the by, is not very likely to run away from you, hold your breath tight—and as the gigantic bird thunders past within a few dozen yards, let drive at his swarthy ribs. Kicking his huge heels like a fallen camel, and striking his bill into the barren earth in his agony, there lies the noble fellow prostrate; whilst, without so much as casting one tender glance behind to ascertain what ails their lord, yon dusky ladies of his seraglio are fast vanishing in the distance. Resuming his stilts, and shaking his drooping wings, he makes one strong effort to follow them—ah no! brave bird, that fleet foot is tied for ever, and will obey thy call no longer. With neck reined back, and ample crop dilated, swelling and boiling like a turkey-cock, he still raises himself with stately mien, hissing, and agitating his white pinions; but though he fain would do you the honour of fracturing your thigh-bone, you prudently prefer discharging the contents of your second barrel at his broad cuirass, which terminating his reign on earth, stretches him upon the sun-baked plain, in all his piebald majesty of ruffled feathers!

From the earliest periods, whether amongst rude or civilized nations, the downy plumes of the Ostrich have been in such universal request, that the value of the spoils more than compensating the labour of the pursuit, this swift-footed bird has held out to the hunter the greatest possible temptations. The Roman soldier often wore Ostrich plumes on his helmet, and they still continue to form an ornament for the head of the warrior. The whole defensive armour of the Nasamones, inhabitants of Libya, was manufactured of the bird's thick skin, which even at the present day is used as a cuirass by some of the Arab troops. In Turkey, the Janissary who signalized himself in arms had the privilege of empluming his turban; and in the kingdom of Congo the feathers mixed with those of the peacock are employed as the ensigns of war and victory. Amongst the ancient Egyptians a religious veneration for the long white feathers, as symbols of truth, so enhanced their value, that, together with the eggs, which were regarded as the emblems of watchfulness, they formed a part of the tribute imposed by the Kings on the conquered countries wherein the bird abounded—the nobles of the land invariably adorning the rich trappings of their horses, as well as their own persons, with a profusion of the choicest.

Lo! white-plumed steeds, and riders bold
Throng in their rich and proud array;
And countless banner-staves unfold
Their glimmering sheen of burnished gold,
Before the torches' ray.

The purpose to which the eggs were applied is not so well understood; but from the religious prejudice which exists

in their favour among the Christians of Egypt, it may be inferred that some superstition was formerly connected with them, and that they were suspended in the temples of the ancient Egyptians as they still are in the Churches of the Copts. Vast numbers of entire skins are sold by the Ethiopians to the merchants of Alexandria, for exportation to Europe, where they occupy so high a place in female estimation; those feathers being more valued by the fair, that have been plucked from the wing of the living bird, than any which are obtained from the defunct subject, the latter being lighter, and more liable from their dryness to the attacks of worms.

Extremely elegant parasols are manufactured by the Bechuana, who fix the larger plumes around a circular piece of leather, through the centre of which a long stick is thrust; and it is a pleasant sight to behold a savage, whose skin, somewhat coarser than the hide of a rhinoceros, might vie in point of colour with a boot, protecting his complexion by the interposition of such an umbrella. The small black feathers of the body, being strung on a strip of leather, and so twisted around a long staff as to resemble the nodding plumes of a hearse, often render most important service to the owner; the implement, if flourished before the eyes of a charging beast, and then planted in the ground, usually betraying him, half blinded with fury, to vent his rage upon it instead of upon the hunter.

We more than once fell in with a large party of Corannas engaged in an attempt to tire out an Ostrich on foot, a feat which they are said sometimes to achieve, knocking him off his legs by *squalling* with a club of rhinoceros horn, fashioned like a hockey stick. Disguised in the complete spoils of the dead bird, and mimicking all the motions of the live one, by pecking at the tops of bushes, and occasionally rubbing its head against its body to brush away the flies, the puny Bushman experiences no difficulty in mixing with a troop of wild animals, and can even deceive the species whose spoils he has borrowed. At the twang of his tiny bow, which rather resembles a child's toy than a mortal weapon, away scours the stricken victim with the herd, in dire consternation; and infinitely more alarmed than all, off scuds the unsuspected impostor with them, again propelling a poisoned shaft as soon as the first panic has subsided. Incredible is the destruction committed in this manner—a slender reed, only slightly barbed with a portion of the leg-bone of an Ostrich, embued with a subtle poison, and launched with unerring dexterity, being sufficient to effect the death of the most powerful animal.

Strabo relates that a somewhat similar stratagem was practised in days of yore by the inhabitants of a part of Abyssinia, who from the circumstance of their subsisting almost exclusively upon the flesh of the Ostrich were denominated *Struthophagi*, and who, covering themselves with the skin, and passing the right hand into the neck, so as to impart to it the motions exhibited by that bird, scattered grain with the left in order to allure the quarry into the snares which had been set for them. Oppian likewise mentions the employment of snares into which Ostriches were driven *en masse*, by a brisk pursuit with horses and dogs; but for a great length of time the Arabs have used horses alone in the chase, following it with the greatest success when the birds unite in vast numbers, and traverse the desert like an army of cavalry. Never putting them to their speed, but driving the troop as much as possible against the wind, and repeatedly intersecting its course by judicious riding, the hunters harass them incessantly; and having fairly wearied them down, rush in and knock them over with cudgels, to avoid sullyng the lustre of the feathers. In this manner some are not unfrequently taken alive, and having been bereft of their costly plumes, are restored to liberty. When slain, the throat is opened, and a ligature being passed below the incision, several of the hunters raise the bird by the head and feet, and shake and drag him about until they obtain from the aperture nearly twenty pounds of a substance of mingled blood and fat, of the consistence of coagulated oil, which, under the denomination of *manteque*, is employed in the preparation of dishes, and the cure of various maladies. In an old subject especially, the flesh is excessively coarse and stringy, of a very dark color, resembling beef in grain and flavor. Yet by the Romans it was very commonly eaten in the time of the Emperors; Apicius gives a recipe for the best sauce; and the imperial glutton Heliogabalus, in one of his fantastic whims, had the brains of no fewer than six hundred served up at a single repast!

During the breeding season, the South African Ostrich associates himself with several females, which deposit their huge eggs in one common nest, if we may so term a shallow cavity, simply scooped in the sand, of such dimensions, that it may be conveniently covered by each mamma in rotation. No attempt at concealment is made, nor is the smallest particle of any kind of material employed, the eggs being nevertheless surrounded by a shallow embankment, and thus prevented from rolling away. In the middle of the day, when the heat of the sun is sufficient to preserve them at a proper temperature, the nest is abandoned: and during the night, when marauding visits are to be anticipated from beasts of prey, the male is said to relieve his mates of the responsible office of incubation—those cocks whose feathers have become draggled by this piece of gallantry, being named *nest-birds* by the Hottentots, who, be it known, are no despicable *connoisseurs* in Ostrich plumes, and wear them on all occasions when desirous of making a conquest. The ground color of the egg is pure white, marbled with clear yellow, and the number found in one place has been known to exceed sixty, the hens continuing to lay during the whole period of incubation, which extends to about forty days, and depositing surplus eggs outside, to serve, it is pretended, as nourishment for the young birds, until they shall be capable of digesting the hard and acrid food upon which the adults subsist. The chicks are about the size of a pullet, and walk the moment they are out of the shell, continuing, in Southern Africa, to receive assistance from the mother for a considerable time, although between the tropics, they are said to be left at once to their own devices—the vivifying heat of the sun having in the first instance relieved the mother altogether from the cares of incubation.

The discovery of an Ostrich's nest was an incident of very frequent occurrence, and any change in the monotony of

an unvaried bread-and-meat diet proving highly agreeable, we always considered fresh eggs to be a prize worth carrying away. The old birds are said to kick them to pieces, should even the print of a human foot be discovered; but our followers were so unable to endure the idea of leaving a single one behind, that they never failed to render this trouble superfluous.* The number being often far greater than could be conveniently dealt with, the expedient by which the removal was effected proved highly diverting. Taking off their leathern inexpressibles, which by the way, were more frequently carried on the muzzles of their guns than upon their own nether extremities, the Hottentots tied the lower ends, so as to form a double sack, and cramming them full, and placing them either across the saddle or on their own backs. Few exhibitions can be conceived more grotesque and diverting than the appearance of a procession of the bandy-legged gentlemen *en chemise*, their baboonish physiognomies protruding betwixt the straddling legs of such a load, and each diligently smoking a clay pipe as he advanced.

An ostrich egg, which is described by all old writers as being "fully as large as the head of a child," measures about six inches in length, and is capable of holding a pint of liquid. The weight is usually three pounds, and although the contents, equivalent to twenty-four eggs of the domestic fowl, are of a far more gross and satiating nature, many of our followers could actually contrive to dispose of two at a single meal. The Hottentot method of roasting them is said to have been practised from time immemorial, and requiring neither gridiron, nor kettle, nor other culinary appliance, will doubtless be considered to be one of great antiquity. The contents having first been thoroughly mixed by means of a stick, introduced through a perforation in the smaller end, and worked between the hands like a chocolate-mill, the egg is placed in the hot embers, where its own shell serves as a frying-pan. The Colonists convert them into substantial puddings or *pâtés*, by the addition of a few sheeps' tails; but when dressed in an orthodox manner, they really prove a highly palatable omelette.

The Bechuana females frequently wear girdles curiously composed of circular pieces of the egg-shell, about the size of a crown-piece, which are so strung together as to convey the appearance of a solid zone of ivory. All the savage tribes of Southern Africa use the shells for drinking cups, and in the inventory of the effects of a defunct Bushman especially, they must form a prominent item. The women of that Lilliputian race, much less shy than their husbands, often followed upon the tracks of our waggons many miles, in order to barter new laid eggs, for which they were exorbitantly paid in tobacco, the grand circulating medium of the country. The sounds uttered by the frail daughters of the desert, although serving to express their meaning, could hardly be termed a language, being, in fact, little more than a succession of clucks and claps of the tongue, such as are employed by a waggoner to urge on a jaded horse. Not easily I shall forget the appearance of one decrepit old hag, who, with an infant slung at her back, was in the daily habit of undertaking a journey of five miles from her wretched abode, for the sole purpose of filling two egg-shells with water from a dirty pool at which we were encamped. Wild and withered, the beldam reminded the beholder of one of Macbeth's weird sisters—her emaciated and famine-worn frame presenting the appearance of a human skeleton enveloped in a wet leathern shroud—the shrivelled sapless limbs and protruding joints positively resembling dry knotted sticks. Her odour tainted the atmosphere; and whilst treating the little half-inanimate miniature of herself to *bon-bons* obtained from the greasy folds of her scanty attire, she explained to us that she had seen me ride past her den in the morning in pursuit of the Ostrich. Certain cluckings, like those of an old hen, accompanied by animated gestures, which ill befitted such a mummy—the see-saw motion of the attenuated arm corresponding with the pursing of the parchment lips, together rendering such a correct imitation of the galloping of a horse, and the retreat of the bird, that no one could mistake it—and the exhibition was immediately followed up by a learned lecture from Cœur de Lion, touching the imminent risk incurred by the man who should wend his solitary way through a country, infested by so imperceptible a population of pigmies.

* When the savages, says Le Vaillant, who are very fond of eggs, find a nest of them, they carry them off successively with a rake, to prevent the mother from perceiving that they have been touched; and if this thieving be carried on with suitable caution, she will lay as many as fifty.



Head of an Ostrich exhibiting at the Surrey Zoological Gardens.