



African Game Protected

**D**ISAPPOINTMENT lies in wait for over-enthusiastic sportsmen who may be induced to go down to South Africa (where it's summer now) with the expectation of shooting a nice mess of hippos or a few giraffes. They just won't get 'em; South African game laws rigidly prohibit their shooting and put strict limitations on the taking of many other kinds of game.

A letter received by Science Service from J. W. H. Wilson, secretary of the Wild Life Protection Society of South Africa, warns against glowing accounts of supersport in that glamorous land that have somehow got into circulation. Hunting is possible there, good hunting, but only under such restrictions as obtain in any civilized country.

Mr. Wilson's letter follows:

"My attention has recently been drawn to more than one attempt, by advertisement and otherwise, to entice overseas sportsmen to the Union of South Africa with promises of facilities for big and small game hunting.

"These promises are couched in language that is unjustifiably optimistic, not to say misleading.

"There is still much good hunting to

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be had in many parts of South Africa but mostly on privately owned farms where in many cases game is carefully preserved.

"Speaking generally, game is to a great extent strictly protected by law throughout South Africa, particularly in the Transvaal, and permits for shooting certain species of game are only granted in those districts where those particular species are fairly numerous.

"Roan Antelope are being strictly protected everywhere. Only in special circumstances will permits be issued for shooting Oribi, Reed Buck and Sable Antelope. Permits to shoot Wildebeest, Zebra, Kudu, Impala and Waterbuck are only issued in those districts where these animals are sufficiently plentiful. Permits to shoot Elephant, Hippo, Rhino and Giraffe are not to be obtained.

"Even a farm of 10,000 acres well stocked with game might easily be deserted by game, other than birds, after a week or two of intensive shooting. Disappointment is bound to be the lot of many who come to South Africa on the strength of such promises.

"Sportsmen who propose visiting South Africa in the hope of getting some big or small game hunting will be well advised to make the closest enquiries before concluding arrangements with persons offering hunting facilities.

"My Society is prepared to give advice on game to any one who desires to visit the Union of South Africa on a shooting trip."

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#### BIOLOGY—CHEMISTRY

### Chemists Making Keys To Fit Nature's Locks

**S**CIENTISTS working at the chemistry of living bodies, called biochemistry, are in a sense locksmiths.

One group of physiological locksmiths are searching for Nature's keys. These are the scientists who are isolating chemicals manufactured in the body, hormones for example, determining their chemical structure and rebuilding them in the laboratory from the original materials used by the body.

Another group, as recently pointed out in the British scientific publication, *Nature*, are trying to make skeleton keys to open Nature's locks. These scientists are concerned with the synthesis or building of simple chemical compounds which will have the same effects as natural hormones and vitamins.

An example of this search for the skeleton keys appears in recent work on

the synthesis of the female sex hormones. In the course of following a scheme to simplify the chemical structure of the molecule of the female sex hormone, scientists have obtained substances with an activity which far outstrips that of the natural hormone. One of these compounds, stilboestrol, is about ten times as powerful as oestrone.

The structure of this powerful synthetic compound does not seem to be at all like that of the natural hormone, but in theory, at least, the synthetic substance could be changed by a little easy chemical manipulation into a substance having the same skeleton framework as the natural hormone.

Stilboestrol, therefore, and related artificial hormone-like substances, appear to be skeleton keys. If they really can go so far in imitation of natural hormones as to open some locks they may prove valuable aids to medicine.

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#### ZOOLOGY

### U. S. A. a "Safety Island" For Important Animals

**S**HOULD Uncle Sam tell his gold ingots, stowed safely at Fort Knox in Kentucky, to move over a bit and make room for specially bred rats and mice and fruitflies and other biologically important lines of animal life that might be blotted out in European air raids?

Germ of such a possibility is seen in the arrival in this country of breeding stocks sent from England when war seemed imminent. One scientist, who sent some valuable rats to Prof. Leslie C. Dunn at Columbia University, pointed out that since his laboratory was near a big railway terminal, a bomb aimed at the terminal might hit the laboratory and thus destroy in a second the genetic work of years. So he wanted his precious rodents to be in a safe place.

*Science News Letter, November 12, 1938*

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