

dealers in wild bird plumage, has placed on inventory all storks now in existence, and all this plumage has been placed in storage. Strict control should therefore be possible, the more so since the legitimate trade is keenly interested in the suppression of bootlegged plumage originating with poachers.

One exceedingly important and self-sacrificing thing was done by Feather Industries. They agreed to the immediate sacrifice of several classes of feathers that have long been an especially severe source of grief to conservationists: egret, heron, bird-of-paradise, and bald and golden eagle. Of course, a society matron possessing an aigrette may continue to wear it without breaking the law. But the thing has automatically become old, passé, dated. The chances are that in far less than six years aigrettes will be as scarce on ladies' heads as elk-tooth watch-charms are on the vests of B.P.O.E. members.

Some humorous situations have arisen as a result of the new plumage legislation. An officer of the Audubon Society repeats a story told him by a socially prominent woman of his acquaintance. She was stopped on the street by a policeman, who was evidently also something of an ornithologist. He asked her if she knew what kind of a feather that was, in the new hat she was wearing. She admitted she didn't know.

"Well," said the officer, "that's an eagle feather, a golden eagle feather, and it's against the law to buy and sell them now. I think I'm supposed to arrest you for having it, but if you'll go home and take it off your hat I'll say no more about it."

"And you can bet a hat," the woman concluded, "that I'll never be caught out with that feather again!"

Actually, of course, the lady was well within the law, and in no real danger of arrest for owning and wearing an eagle feather. The new setup merely bans the commercial importation and sale of wild-bird plumage. Moreover, ladies' hats will not have to go completely featherless after the present stock of wild-bird plumage is liquidated. The new legislation, and the voluntary action of the feather trade, provides for legal traffic in ten species of domesticated birds, ranging from chickens and ducks to ostriches and peacocks. What with the skill of present-day feather workers in trimming and dyeing, the old wild-bird plumage, marketed at the price of so much suffering and death, will hardly be missed.

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BACTERIOLOGY

Bacilli In Soil Prove Deadly Enemies of Many Bacteria

Either of Two Species Found Able to Kill Cultures Of Bacteria of More Than Score of Kinds, Fungi Too

TWO species of bacilli that live in the soil have been found to be deadly enemies of a considerable number of species of bacteria and fungi that cause diseases in plants, animals and man, by Dr. P. A. Ark and Miss Marjorie L. Hunt of the University of California. This adds to the list, only recently started, of germs that kill other germs, in microscopic version of the "bug-eat-bug" struggle that has long been known to go on incessantly in the insect world. (*Science*, April 11.)

One of the two newly recognized germ-killing bacilli has been known for many years as an abundant but apparently harmless dweller in the soil. Bacteriologists call it *Bacillus vulgatus*. The other is a yellow bacillus that has not yet been identified; it may be a species hitherto unknown to science.

Either of the two species has been

proved able to kill cultures of bacteria of more than a score of species, as well as half-a-dozen kinds of disease-causing fungi. These included the diphtheria bacillus, the staphylococcus that causes common boils, the germ of a fatal disease of chickens, the fungus that produces wheat scab, the bacterium of soft rot in vegetables, and many other undesirable citizens of the microscopic world.

The two bacilli do their deadly work by means of substances, of still unknown composition, which they secrete. Dr. Ark and Miss Hunt have already learned, however, that these substances are soluble in water, that they are effective in extremely small amounts, and that they can be boiled for an hour without losing their potency. Further investigations are still in progress.

Science News Letter, July 5, 1941

MEDICINE

Alcohol Only Incidental In Causing Liver Cirrhosis

OLD Man Alcohol was absolved largely, if not completely, from blame as causing cirrhosis of the liver in a report by three government scientists to the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, meeting in Chicago. The scientists are Dr. R. D. Lillie, Dr. F. S. Daft and Dr. W. H. Sebrell, of the National Institute of Health.

Too little protein or maybe too few vitamins in the diet, rather than too much alcohol, is seen as the fundamental cause of the condition.

Rats kept on a diet low in protein foods, which would mean little meat, cheese, eggs and nuts in human diet terms, got cirrhosis of the liver, Dr. Daft reported. When the rats were given 20% alcohol instead of drinking water, the cirrhosis was a little worse and developed a little faster, but the rats got cirrhosis on the poor diet without any alcohol.

Whether it is the small amount of protein in the diet or some other feature of it that caused the cirrhosis is not yet known. The government scientists have a

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