

connection between chronic tetany and parathyroid deficiency and to demonstrate the advantage of Voronoff's innovation. Even if the hopes of the authors are destroyed by the ultimate disappearance of this, as of most grafts, they have at any rate made a substantial contribution to the resources of gland therapy."

OILED FEATHERS FORM INSULATING AIR MATTRESS

The feathers of aquatic birds serve both as an air cushion and as a heat insulator. Prof. Joseph Barcroft of King's College, Cambridge, in a Royal Institution lecture recently said that the reason waterfowl do not sink like other ordinary vertebrates in water is on account of the air retained in their feathers. The water does not work into the interstices between the frills of the feathers because they are so completely oiled that they never get wet even on the surface.

The air imprisoned in the feathers also serves to keep the bird warm. The hardihood of water birds in this respect is fairly manifested by the familiar sight of ducks swimming in the ice-bound spaces of lakes and rivers, apparently enjoying themselves.

"It is not that the separation of a surface of cold water by an inch or so of air from the body of the bird would keep it warm," said Prof. Barcroft, "but convection currents would be set up which would rapidly cool the bird". Caught up, however, in the fine mesh work of feathers the air is almost motionless and being a very poor conductor the body warmth is all retained.

AUSTRALIA SEEKS CACTUS ENEMIES

The prickly pear cactus is advancing in Australia at the rate of a million acres a year. Leith F. Hitchcock of the Australian Commonwealth Prickly Pear Board estimates that already 60,000,000 acres of East Australia alone are infected with this spiny pest.

Mr. Hitchcock has just arrived at the field station of the U. S. Bureau of Entomology at Uvalde, Texas, to take charge of the North American phase of Australia's war on the prickly plant. So kindly has the cactus taken to the climate of the isolated continent that it occupies more than twice as much land as all the other crops put together, and so desperate have the inhabitants become that every sort of enemy that the cactus ever had in any part of the world is being drafted into service in the wild hope that it will help check its spread.

For that purpose the Australian Prickly Pear Board has sent out men to the arid regions of the Southwest to collect specimens of the various types of insects that prey on the prickly pear. Thus far, according to Mr. Hitchcock, different species of the mealy bugs or cochineal insects have been found most successful. The insects are grown in cages at the entomological station here and the most vicious attackers of the cactus are shipped to Australia. There the authorities, taking warning from

the rapid increase of the artificially introduced rabbit and the cactus itself, grow the insects in quarantine through at least one generation before they turn them loose to do their worst.

SMITH AND JOHNSON LEADING U. S. SURNAMES

The expression, "As common as Smith, Brown and Jones", is not based upon scientific investigations, but it is a close approach to the facts, according to a report by Howard F. Barker, of Riverdale, Md., in a recent issue of American Speech.

The three most popular surnames of America are, Smith, Johnson, and Brown, according to Mr. Barker, who has lately made a study of the frequency of surnames. Smith is a name borne by more than one in each hundred of our population. Johnson has come into second place; and even Brown and Williams have taken the lead over Jones.

Certain cities show peculiarities of their own. The name Johnson leads in St. Paul and Minneapolis, for instance, by virtue of being a favorite name among Scandinavian-Americans. Smith leads in New York City with Cohen, Miller, Brown, and Schwartz following in the order named. In Chicago, Johnson leads again; in Boston, Smith leads with Sullivan close on its heels.

There are more Smiths and Johnsons in the United States than there are people in Detroit. The Browns brought together would fall little short of making a city the size of Boston. The Williamses total somewhat more, the Joneses some what less than the population of Los Angeles, the Millers could almost take command of Pittsburgh; the Davises would fill San Francisco or Buffalo.

The number of people bearing our ten leading names in a 112,000,000 total are as follows: Smith, 1,304,300; Johnson, 1,024,200; Brown, 730,500; Williams, 684,700; Jones, 658,300; Miller, 625,800; Davis, 537,900; Anderson, 477,300; Wilson, 422,300; Moore, 363,400. The ten names are all from the British Isles and may be traced to different parts of the islands.

TABLOID BOOK REVIEW

THE DECLINE OF THE WEST. By Oswald Spengler. New York: Knopf. 1926. \$6.00.

At last a publisher has been found with the courage to carry out the translation of this colossal work. If not an epoch-making book, it is undeniably an epoch-marking book. Though prepared before the war, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* measures the depths of despair into which the war has plunged thinking men of both the victorious and defeated nations, alike victims of the Great Catastrophe. In scope of conception, profusion of learning, boldness of generalization, impressiveness of utterance, eloquence of language, Spengler ranks with the German philosophers of the old school, with Hegel, Schopenhauer and Hartmann. He also shows the characteristics of the German philosopher in his overloading of sentences, cloudiness of meaning,