EASTER HAT FASHIONS MAY BE CHANGED BY CONGRESS

A RARE BIRD FROM THE SOUTH SEAS, FOUND BY THE PLUME HUNTERS ONLY TO BE EXTERMINATED.

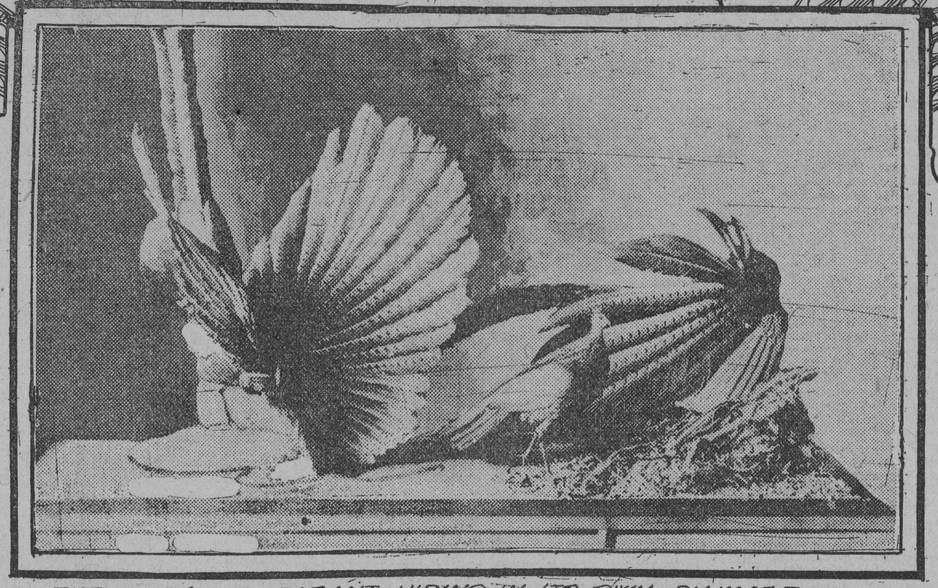
MILADY'S LOVE FOR FINE FEATHERS MEANS THE EXTERMINATION OF RARE AND BEAUTIFUL BIRDS IN A DECADE; SO THE IMPORTATION OF PLUMAGE MAY BE PROHIBITED

THE EGRET, TRAGEDY QUEEN OF THE BIRD WORLD

BIRDS OF PARADISE ARE GROWING SCARCE IN NEW GUINEA, THEIR ONLY HOME

THE LYRE BIRD OF AUSTRALIA IS WANING EXTINCTION

300,000 DANCING ALBATROSS WERE KILLED IN ONE RAID



THE ARGUS PHEASANT HIDING IN ITS OWN PLUMAGE.

BY WILLIAM ATHERTON DU PUY.

THE Congress of the United States is asked to supersede Paris in stipulating the manner of Easter bonnet that shall adorn the heads of America's fair femininity. For the present Easter Sunday the American woman may run riot and use whatever manner of headgear she prefers, but it may be the last season in which she will have that privilege. The special session of Congress will be shown the dire consequences of the course matters are taking and will be asked to take a hand in the hat question. Chapeau legislation seems almost sure.

Unles this course is taken a score of the most beautiful things that the world has ever possessed will be destroyed forever. These are the birds of brilliant plumage that flash in the woods from pole to pole.

The magnificent bird of paradise cannot survive the blowguns of the natives of New Guinea another five years unless the use of its feathers in millinery is stopped.

The lyre bird of Australia, greatest of mimics, is almost gone.

The snowy egret is being wiped from the jungles of tropic America.

The great condor of the Andes is fast becoming but a memory, because milady likes its feathers.

There is but one passenger pigeon in the world and it has no mate.

The terns of the Atlantic Coast have been kept alive only through the agency of bird preserves.

Hummingbirds are killed by the millions and their skins are sold for two cents each.

Even the stork, symbol of birth, is threatened with extinction.

And now appears the friend of bird life who, by the scratch of a pen, would stop the unthinking barbarity of the women who wear bird-trimmed hats the world around by making it impossible for them to do so. Thus would the slaughter lose the cause of its existence. Thus would the birds be saved. The simple expedient is to prohibit the introduction into any country, beginning with the United States, of any wild bird plumage.

Cause of the Slaughter.

The world campaign against all these creatures of the air has developed only in the last two decades, and it is only just now that the public is awakening to the fact that the birds of the world will be exterminated unless prompt action is taken. Women have worn feathers for more than 20 years, but the great world demand and world attempt to supply that demand has reached a dangerously effective state only of late. The world today takes its fashions from Paris and Berlin and London. The command of these centers to put feathers on the hat has traveled the world around. Paris and Berlin and London have then set about supplying the demand. They have sent forth the word wherever their traders go that there is a market for the feathers of brilliant birds. The traders have offered attractive prices to hunters everywhere, and the hunters have enlisted the aid of the natives of all lands.

The trogon, that resplendent green bird which is the national emblem of Guatemala, has been hunted so nearly to extinction that the New York zoo is unable to secure a live specimen. The cock of the rock, which find its home in the high mountains of Peru, is being worn on women's hats in Piccadilly. Silver pheasants are being killed in Burmah and shipped illicitly to London by way of Hangoon. The natives high up on the Amazon are slaughtering hummingbirds to untold millions. The isolated islands of the Pacific being visited by poachers and the bird life upon them exterminated. All this is happening on the basis of a great industry that is quite naturally created by a demand for plumage on the part of the wearers of feminine headgear.

In this demand for feathers the highest prices are always paid for the most beautiful birds. Quite naturally, in accordance with the law of demand and supply, the birds that are most prirzed for their beauty will be the first to disappear. When the most beautiful species are gone the plumage of less attractive birds is substituted and those species are likwise exterminated. In this way first one of these magnificent creatures of nature is wiped off the face of the earth for all time, and then its successor is forced to run the same gamet. So is a sort of a fugitive law set up by the spoilers under which the victim is left no chance of escape.

To the Rescue.

The various commonwealths in the United States have passed more or less efficient laws for the protection of game within their borders. The federal government likewise has a law which prohibits the interstate shipment of game protected by given states. These laws are somewhat difficult of enforcement, but are comparatively effective.

With relation to the birds that are slaughtered in foreign lands, this government has taken no action other than to place a duty of 20 per cent. on imported raw feathers and 60 per cent. on imported dressed feathers. Some of the states have stipulated that the feathers of no species of bird found in that state shall be offered for sale, even though imported. The general sale of feathers, however, makes it easy for the dealers to evade the law.

Now appear the representatives of the great associations that are friends to bird life, and that want to prevent the extermination of attractive birds, whether they are native of the United States or of some other community. Prominent among these advocates are such men as Dr. William T. Hornaday, president of the New York Zoological Society; T. Gilbert Pearson, secretary National Association of Audubon Societies, and Henry Oldys, bird expert of the Department of Agriculture. These men see a way out.

The special session of Congress is to revise the tariff. When, in that revision, the schedule is reached which has to do with the duty that is imposed upon imported feathers, the friends of bird life will ask that a very simple little clause be inserted. This clause will read something as follows:

"Provided, that the importation of the plumage of any wild bird is hereby prohibited."

So, at a single stroke, would it be made impossible for the women of America to wear the plumage of wild birds upon their hats. If any woman were to appear wearing aigrettes after the passing of this law, she could be called upon to explain the source from which she secured them. The merchant selling them would likewise be faced with the necessity of a satisfactory explanation, and so might the aigrettes be traced to the source from which they came. As it would be unlawful to kill the aigret in the United States and unlawful to import its plumage, there would be no escape.

Aigrettes and Ladies' Maids.

It has been suggested that under such a law the aigrettes that are now in this country would be very highly prized and would continue to appear on hats for years to come. The bird lovers state that they have no fear of the feathers appearing on fashionable hats even on Easter Sunday, a year from today, were Congress to take action. They base this assertion upon an alleged understanding of a certain phase of the feminine mind. Wearing an aigrette in the first place would be a confession of the use of plumage that was a year old. Such plumage would be quite generally discarded at the end of the season and would come to be worn only by ladies' maids and such members of the servant class as fall heir to the discarded raiment of their mistresses. So would the popularity of the feather as a hat adornment cease to exist at the end of the season.

Of course, the closing of the American markets to bird plumage would not of necesssity stop bird slaughter the world around. It could be expected to have a very material effect, however, for the dictators of fashion want to give their edicts force the world around. The American market is very important and Paris would think twice before discarding the American hat trade.

In England the campaign against the use of bird plumage is even more active than in America. The House of Commons and the House of Lords have each passed a bill prohibiting the importation or bird plumage, but at different times. The law has thus never been written on the statutes. It is bitterly fought by the feather merchants of London, who are the most powerful in the world. With the prohibition effective in America it is probable that Great Britain would immediately follow suit, as would Germany. This would put Paris in a position where its styles, if they sanction bird plumage, might not be adopted in the greater part of the world. So would America become a pioneer in the application to bird life of that principle under which she has already saved from extinction the buffalo, the elk, the seal and other creatures of the wild.

Tragedy of the Egret.

The stories of the vanishing birds are many and tragic. There is, for instance, the egret, that beautiful bird of the heron family, which was at one time familiar in 40 states of our own Union. The egret is a wanderer by nature and the youth of this nation of a generation ago was sure to see it at one season or another stalking shyly about the marshy places of a neighborhood or standing majestically upon some tree limb along the creek.

But the feathers of the egret, some 20 years ago, began to come into fashion. Steadily the demand began to bring forth more and more feathers from the haunts of the egret. Hunters learned of the possible profits, of the habits of the birds, and found great rookeries in the swamps of the South where they came in season to build their nests and rear their young. Soon it was discovered that during the nesting period the feathers of the egret developed peculiarly and were much more attractive than at other times. Soon the public came to demand that particular variety of aigrettes which were in reality the marital plumes of the species that developed at nesting time.

To supply this demand the hunters came to make special efforts to kill the birds at the time that these aigrettes were especially developed. This was while the mother was feeding her young. The hunters hung about the rookeries and spared the lives of the mothers until the young were in the nests and then killed them. With the mother dead the young slowly starved and the sacrifice was multiplied. Thus did the killing of one bird mean much more toward the extermination of the species than it would seem.

So the egret came to be very scarce in the United States. Its final refuge was in the swamps of Florida and here it was long hunted after it had practically disappeared from other haunts. Finally the various states prohibited the killing of the egret and, while the law is very difficult to enforce, they are being preserved and allowed to multiply to a certain extent.

The egret was formerly abundant almost the world around, in tropical and temperate zones. Its practical extermination has already been brought about in many countries. At present the greatest activity on the part of the egret hunters is in Venezuela and Columbia. So rapidly are the birds being killed in those tropical countries where they are making their last stand that it is estimated that none will exist in another decade.

The Most Beautiful Bird.

Unquestionably one of the most beautiful creatures that has been called into existence since the world began is the bird of paradise, peculiar to certain of the South Sea Islands. New Guinea is the chief home of the bird of paradise. This creature of the tropical forests which, when strutting, surrounds itself with an aura of brilliant plumage, has astounded travelers from all parts of the world since first they began visiting these islands.

The range of the bird of paradise is very narrow, being limited to those islands, of which New Guinea is the center. Because of this limited region in which it is found it is a species that may easily be exterminated. Travelers who visited New Guinea a score of years ago told fantastic tales of these beautiful creatures of the air and of their abundance. Specimens of them were brought back to the Western nations and some began to find their way into the millinery trade.

The beauty of the feathers attracted much attention and created a strong demand. The traders began to call on the hunters and the natives for bird of paradise plumes. The offer of money accomplished the result. The natives of New Guinea went forth into the forests to slay these creatures of beauty that had been theirs since the beginning of time. In these native haunts they climbed high into the tops of trees and there laid in wait with their blowguns until a bird approached into the range of these silent implements of death. The noiseless shot pierced the creature of color on a nearby twig, but its fall was so silent that not even its mate was warned of the danger.

So one and another and another fell, and so was the demand for plumes supplied but to cause a greater demand. Thirty and forty and as much as sixty dollars is the price of the skin of a single bird of paradise. The time for their protection is almost past. The traveler who 20 years ago saw one of these splendid creatures on every bough in the New Guinea forests may now travel a day and never see a bird. If the demand still continues the time is very near when not enough of them will be left to propagate the species, even though the slaughter is stopped.

Lyre Bird of Australia.

The lyre bird, of Australia, is another rare species that is among the most remarkable of all birds. It gets its name from the peculiar shape of its tail feathers, which resemble in a remarkable way the form and appearance of a lyre. This bird is unknown except in Australia. It was at one time very abundant in that island, but like the bird of paradise it suffered when the millinery trade placed a price on its life. Australia protects it by making its slaughter a violation of the law and its shipment a fine of $250.

This does much toward giving the lyre bird a chance, but as long as there is a high-priced demand for these birds there will be poachers to evade the law. But a short time ago 200 lyre bird skins were seized en route to London from Australia.

This bird is the most remarkable mimic that there is among all the creatures of the world. It can sing a song of any other bird of the woods. One which lives near a house will mimic most remarkably all the sounds of that household. The ax of the woodchopper, the bark of a wild dog, the screech of a saw, the laugh of children, and even the spoken words of the teamster will be reproduced with a remarkable exactness by this bird. One settler tells of a lyre bird which used to mimic exactly his call of "Geup, Bess," to his driving nag. The lyre bird will be protected if bird plumage on hats were legislated out of existence.

On our own Atlantic seaboard there has been, during the last score of years, a most striking example of the exterminating influences of the demand of the millinery trade for feathers. There were formerly two species of water fowls from Maine to Florida that were exceedingly abundant. These were terns and gulls. So great was the number of both species that no one would have thought it possible to exterminate either. Finally the millinery trade began to use terns skins in ornamenting hats.

Passing of the Tern.

Half a dozen years later the Audubon Society suddenly awaked to an appreciation of the fact that the tern on the Atlantic Coast was ceasing to exist. Through the efforts of this society Muskeget Island, off the Massachusetts coast, and, Gardeners Island, off Long Island, were set aside as bird refuges, and here were remnants of the tern family preserved, and here did they multiply and again begin stocking the nearby coasts.

The supply of tern feathers having been exhausted, the trade has turned to gulls. These are much less ornamental, but the law operates on less attractive feathers when the more attractive are gone. The gulls of the whole Atlantic seaboard are now threatened with extermination despite the greateness of their numbers.

A most striking example of the heartless methods used by the plume gatherers in their wars of extermination against the feathered creatures of the wold may be had by reciting the exploits of one man on one of Uncle Sam's Islands in the Hawaiian group. Laysan is the little island, two miles long and half as wide, lying 700 miles west from Honolulu. The harassed birds of the midocen have long found it a secure haven, a place of rest from their weary flights, uninhabited and little frequented by man. It is the home of the Laysan albatross, that stately creature of the Southern seas, which has attracted much attention from the occasional visitor because of the manlike dances that the birds carry on among themselves.

Slaughtering the Albatross.

Here, in the nesting season came these albatrosses until the ground of the island was entirely covered by them. In 1909 one Max Schlemmer, of Honolulu, fitted out an expedition to Laysan Island for the purpose of gathering plumes for the millinery trade. Twenty-three Japanese laborers were employed by him. They proceeded to the islands, and there, day by day for months, killed with clubs these birds as fast as their plumage could be stripped from them. The butchery went on until 300,000 birds had been killed.

The murderous expedition was reported to the United States and the revenue cutter Thetis was dispatched to Laysan. There the poacher Schlemmer and his Japanese laborers were all placed under arrest and returned to Honolulu. Had they not been stopped it is believed that they would have exterminated all the creatures on this bird paradise of the mid-Pacific.

These are but examples of the things that are happening. In Paris a large feather shop is known to have purchased the skins of 400,000 skylarks from Finland in one consignment. Another house bought, through one dealer, 10 tons of ptarmagin skins. The trade is so large that whenever it starts on the trail of any one species of birds it means the extermination of that species. The friends of birdlife argue that there is no time whatever to be lost if the beautiful birds of the world are to be saved from complete extermination. The world is in immediate danger of becoming birdless and the most beautiful go first.

Ostrich Plumes Safe.

The proposed prohibition would not apply to ostrich plumes, nor the feathers of domestic fowls. The ostrich industry has become important in Arizona and California, the plumes are most adaptable for hat decoration, and their production is humane. The ostrich industry supports the present movement. Sportsmen are likewise coming to know that the plume hunters are exterminating many game birds and are likewise becoming interested in the suppression of the trade.

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