

Expunged Islands.

WITH a view to exploring the Royal Company's Islands, said to be situate about 400 miles southward of Tasmania, and discovered about 1840, to ascertain their avifauna and the geographical distribution of certain birds, the Council of the Aust. O.U. has been in communication with the Admiralty authorities, to fix, if possible, the exact position of the supposed islands, or if they be non-existent to establish the fact, because the islands appear on some of the Admiralty's own charts as well as on many up-to-date maps. Consequent upon the correspondence the hon. secretary of the Union, Mr. D. Le Souëf, has received a letter from Mr. W. J. L. Wharton, Hydrographer to the Admiralty, accompanied with a copy of the following "Notice to Mariners":—

ROYAL COMPANY'S ISLANDS—NON-EXISTENCE OF.

On old charts of the South Pacific Ocean, in the area south of Australia, a group of islands, named Royal Company's Islands, are marked as existing in lat. 50° 20' S., long. 140° 0' E. They have consequently been inserted for many years in the Admiralty publications.

These islands are not mentioned in any Sailing Directions, the original report of their existence cannot be traced, nor have they apparently been seen by any passing vessel.

Since 1890 the Hydrographic Department of the Admiralty has been collecting data showing where ice and icebergs may be met with in the Southern oceans, and this has necessitated plotting the tracks of many vessels passing south of Australia, several of which have passed over or close to the position assigned to the Royal Company's Islands without seeing them, or any sign of land near them:—thus in 1892 the *Pakeha* passed 1 mile north of their assigned position; in 1893 the *Crusader* passed 5 miles north of them; in 1894 the *Rangatira* passed 15 miles north of them; in 1895 the *Maori* passed 2½ miles south, and the *Rangatira* 15 miles south of them; in 1889 the *Rangatira* passed 1 mile south of them, and the *Matatua* 2 miles north; in 1900 the *Matatua* passed over the position in which they are supposed to be situated; in 1901 the *Karamea* passed 40 miles south of them, and in 1902 the *Pakeha* passed 12 miles south of them.

As no certain information is available as to why these islands were originally placed on the charts, and as it is evident from the tracks plotted that no land exists in the locality in which they are marked on the charts, they have now been expunged from the Admiralty publications.

This notice affects the following Admiralty charts:—Atlantic and Indian Oceans, &c., No. 2,483; Pacific Ocean, Nos. 2,683 and 788.

By command of their Lordships,

W. J. L. WHARTON, Hydrographer.

Hydrographic Office, Admiralty, London, 2nd April, 1904.

About Members.

MR. A. Mattingley (hon. treasurer Aust. O.U.), Custom House, Melbourne, has a duplicate copy of "The Birds of Australia," by G. J. Broinowski, comprising 300 full-paged coloured illustrations,

with descriptive matter, &c., of over 700 species. The whole cost £21, and is newly bound. Can be had for seven guineas.

THE great Boer War brought the bond of British brethren all over the world closer together in more ways than one. The prominence which it gave to the colonies caused the British Ornithologists' Union to create a "colonial membership." This distinction fell upon two members of the Aust. O.U. last year—namely, Col. W. V. Legge, F.Z.S., Tasmania, and Capt. F. W. Hutton, F.R.S., New Zealand; while the honour this year—the sole one for Australasia—has fallen to Mr. A. J. Campbell. Colonial memberships are limited to ten residents in the British colonies and India.

CAPTAIN F. W. HUTTON, F.R.S. (President of the Aust. O.U.), and Mr. James Drummond are publishing a work, "The Animals of New Zealand," which should be valuable to all Australasian naturalists. The aim of the authors has been "to combine popular information with the purely scientific," and in their prospectus they acknowledge that they have drawn freely on the work of others to make their own complete. This is as it should be. The contents embrace almost everything from mammalia to the N.Z. batrachia, and the list of birds dealt with is so full that to ornithologists the work should be a treasure. Whitcombe and Tombs Limited are the publishers, and the specimen illustrations are as excellent as the text.

THE following are extracts from a private letter received from Mr. Ed. Degen by Mr. A. J. Campbell:—

"Once more I am happy to inform you I am on my way to the Dark Continent, on which we hope to land within a few hours. This time I am a member of the exploring staff of a private expedition of French enterprise—namely, that of the Baron Maurice de Rothschild of Paris, a young and enthusiastic traveller. As usual, I am to look after the preserving and collecting parts, but it offers a good deal of other opportunities to make oneself useful, such as anthropological research, photography (of which we have about a dozen different apparatus, as well as cinematographs, &c.) The actual leader will be the Marquis de Bonchamps, a famous explorer, and a companion for some time to Colonel Marchand, of Fashoda fame. I am engaged as second naturalist, and my colleague, Dr. Neuville, of the Paris Museum, to my exquisite delight, is a capital chum. So also is our medical member, Dr. Roger, who also had some previous experience in Abyssinia. We shall go through that country again, going up to Addis Abbeba, the capital, and thence south *via* Lakes Zual, Hogga, Lausana, Abaya, Stephanie, and Randolph, finally picking our way to the south-west into the districts between the Victoria Nile and the sources of the Albert Edward, and west and south of them to the Semliki Forest of the Upper Congo, having, if possible (seasons and circumstances permitting), a peep at the Mountains of the Moon, an ambition we all cherish. In magnitude our caravans will assume considerable proportions, and will not be very much inferior to those of such explorers as Livingstone, Stanley, or Burton. Time permitting, a decent 'bag' ought to be obtained (providing we have not to leave

behind our own valuable skins), in which case an Okapi might be one of the results. But this is anticipating. There will be over 500 camels ready when we get into the desert country from the heights of Abyssinia, to the latter of which we shall avail ourselves of mule transport from Harrar. This will be our actual starting point, the latter being now made accessible by the railway line from Djibontil up some 250 miles, within a two-days' journey."

Big Bags of Game.

THE *Kerang New Times*, under date 7/6/04, gives two "record" bags of Quails obtained on the Benjeroop (Murray) stubbles—a party of four shooters in five hours securing 171 brace of birds, and the second party (2 guns) obtaining 98 brace. 'A thoughtful sportsman is satisfied with 10 brace of birds for his day's enjoyment, or, say, an outside limit of 20 brace; but these ardent Kerang shooters have each exceeded by one hundred per cent. the latter number. Surely this is killing "the goose that lays the golden egg." In the near future, in the interest of the birds, as well as the shooters themselves, the law may step in, as it does in America, to "limit" the number of bags.

Since the above was written, the following clipping has been taken from *The Argus*, 18/6/04:—"Three well-known sportsmen of the Western District—Messrs. De Little, Hood, and Affleck—left Murtoa on Friday with a bag of 1,003 Quail, the result of three days' shooting."

In connection with "big bags," attention may be called to the following passages from a lecture delivered last year by Mr. E. North Buxton before the British Society of Arts. They have a definite bearing on the subject:—"While in Vienna the other day I saw, at the taxidermist's, the bag of a sportsman just returned from Somaliland. Amongst other things were 70 heads of Soemmering Gazelle. What can any man want with 70 specimens? But the remarkable thing about them was that nearly the whole were females or immature males. . . . I am here to-night to try and focus and unite the growing public sentiment in favour of the restriction of that class of sportsman whose frenzy and ignorance have been responsible for such terrible destruction." Once the fauna of South Africa was the richest in the world; for many years all the region from the Cape of Good Hope to Orange River has been denuded of game, much of Central Africa as well. Since Lord Milner has been in power some reserves have been proclaimed; but is it not a fact that it is almost an impossibility to get anything like the full number of species of bird or beast back to a place where it has been ruthlessly slaughtered? According to Mr. Buxton, "every British protectorate in Africa has now a series of ordinances for the protection of wild animals and birds." Some of the larger species of game are altogether