

Reviews.

NATURAL HISTORY OF ANTARCTICA.

["Report on the Collections of Natural History made in the Antarctic Regions during the Voyage of the *Southern Cross*." Printed by order of the Trustees, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell-road, S.W. 1902.]

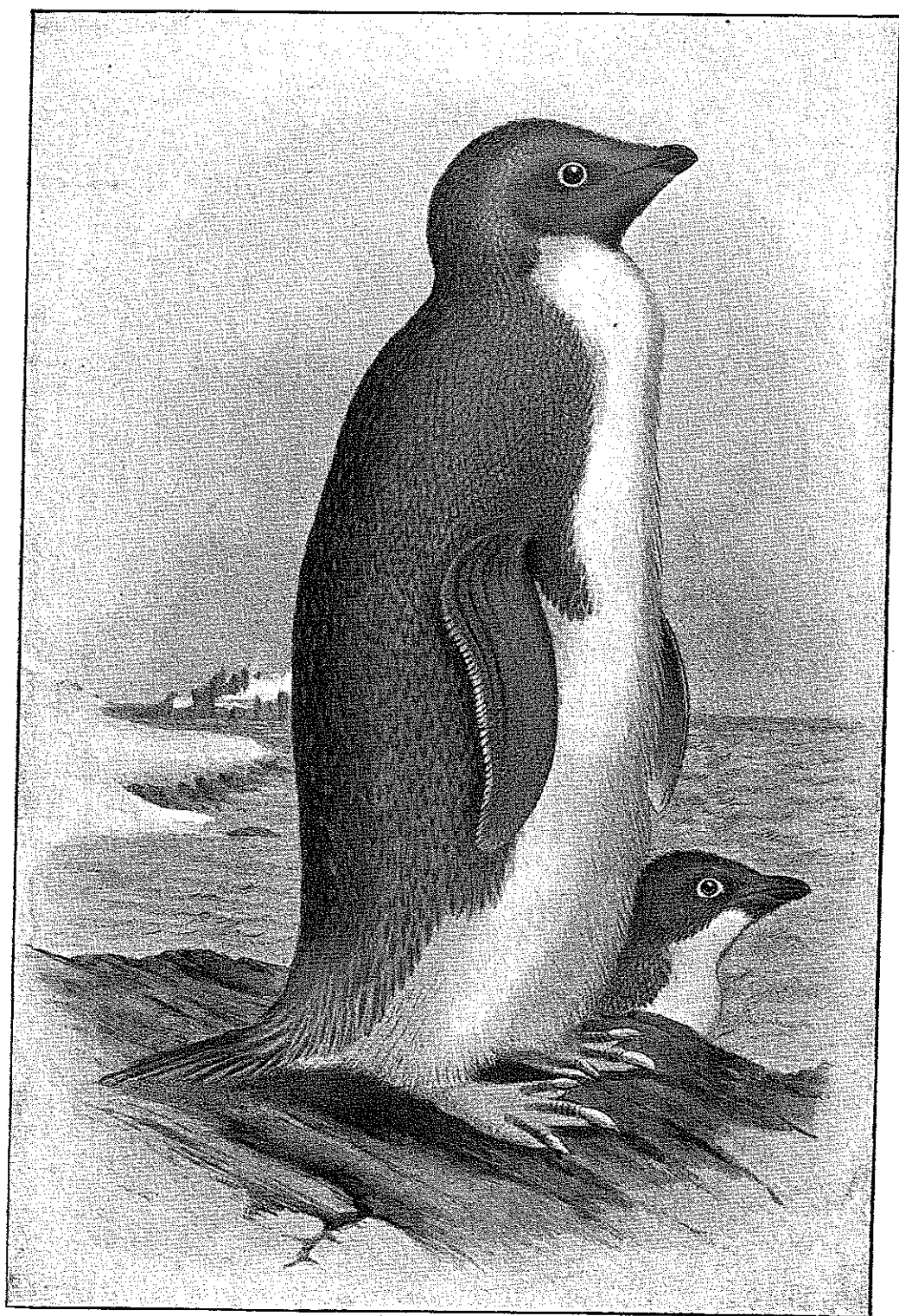
THE great home Museum, in its usual classical style, has issued a bulky report, including 53 plates, results of the work of the scientific collectors of the *Southern Cross* Expedition, which was fitted out by Sir George Newnes, Bart.

It will be remembered that the expedition was in charge of Mr. Borchgrevink, and that it spent the winter of 1899 on Victoria Land. Mr. Nicolai Nanson, the zoologist, most unfortunately for the enterprise, died in October, 1899, but Mr. Hugh Evans (previously known to Australians in having been associated with Mr. H. Gunderson and Mr. Robert Hall in the trip of the *Edward* to Kerguelen in 1897) carried on the collecting as best he could.

Part IV. of the book deals with the Aves, and has been written by Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe, F.L.S., &c., also an hon. member of the Aust. O.U. The letterpress has a complement of four beautifully coloured plates (Grönvold—West, Newman) of birds and eggs, besides many half-tone blocks (by the permission of Sir G. Newnes and Messrs. Hurst and Blackett) of birds amongst the ice. Dr. Sharpe was somewhat handicapped by the "unexpected absence of official note-book," which appeared to have been lost, but he has culled interesting field observations from MSS. in possession of Mrs. Nanson, wife of the deceased zoologist.

The following birds which are more particularly Australian are mentioned, viz.:—Yellow-webbed Storm Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*), found breeding on Victoria Land; Black-bellied Storm-Petrel (*Fregetta melanogaster*), Brown Petrel (*Priofinus cinereus*), Silvery-grey Petrel (*Priocella glacialoides*), Spectacled Petrel (*Majaqueus æquinoctialis*), Soft-plumaged Petrel (*Æstrelata mollis*), Giant Petrel (*Ossifraga gigantea*), Cape Petrel (*Daption capensis*), Banks Dove-Petrel (*Prion banksi*). Several Albatrosses are noted, but they were mostly seen in the open sea, not within the pack-ice. It is interesting to find that a new Tern has been recorded for the New Zealand region—namely, *Sterna vittata*—which was procured at Campbell Island.

The most conspicuous birds, however, in Victoria Land are its Penguins. A number of Emperor Penguins (*Aptenodytes forsteri*), the largest known, standing 4 feet in height, were captured, but unfortunately their breeding place was not discovered; while near the headquarters camp the smaller Adelia Penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliæ*) were breeding in vast rookeries, the photographs taken by Mr. Bernacchi being reminiscent of the great Penguin rookeries of "Kings" and "Royals" on Macquarie Island. The figure of *Pygoscelis adeliæ* is here reproduced from plate vii. In life the bird wears a light bluish coat, with pure white breast; bill crimson and black; feet flesh-coloured; height, $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet.



Adelia Penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*).

FROM A DRAWING BY H. GRONVOLD, B. M. REP., "SOUTHERN CROSS."

Concerning this curious inhabitant of Antarctica the following are the graphic field observations of Mr. Bernacchi :—

“The arrival of the small Penguins at Cape Adare presented a most curious appearance. When walking on the rough ice they struttled along upright, but as soon as they reach ice upon which there is some snow they drop down on their breasts and glide along toboggan fashion, making use of flippers as well as feet. They all travelled along the same path, which soon became blood-stained from their bleeding feet, cut by the projecting pieces of ice. They came from the north, and must have travelled at least 20 miles over very rough ice. Some landed upon the pebbly shore at Cape Adare, and nearly all at the same spot, but others continued to journey southwards towards the bottom of Robertson Bay, where there was another rookery. It was like an immense army. For fourteen days they came in an absolute unbroken continuation. One day we witnessed the black meandering line of Penguins from the summit of Cape Adare, and could trace it for quite two miles out towards the northern horizon.

“They did not in the least hurry themselves, but trudged along steadily in their own phlegmatic way. Their pace was, perhaps, one mile an hour. When approached by anyone they stop, and make no attempt to get out of the way, but they shorten their necks and lower their beaks until they assume the appearance of looking down their noses; then they slowly stretch their necks and raise their beaks until they point upwards towards the sky, making at the same time a droll raucous cry—all this with a most ludicrous aspect of indignation, as no doubt they were profoundly indignant. Sometimes one or more of the most audacious would rush out from among their companions and attack you furiously; on presenting the sole of the foot—booted, of course—they peck at it viciously, and with such vigour as to leave marks upon the hard frozen leather. They do not give way an inch of ground, but stand up before you erect and determined.

“As to their general habits: On landing they made straight for a certain spot; some to the summit of the Cape, up the snow slope of which they climb with great facility, some to the base of the mountain, and others scattered over the shore. They congregate together in communities or social coteries of 50 upwards. On reaching the spot they immediately start to build their nests, in which work the male as well as the female participates. The nests are crude affairs; the first operation consists of scratching a small depression in the old guano; then pebbles are carried to it in their bills and piled around, and as soon as it is completed, which takes a day or so, the female sits in it and the male commences his courtship. It was highly amusing to watch their love antics. Some are industrious, and pile around many hundreds of small pebbles; others—the lazy ones—were quite proud and delighted with only half a dozen. On approaching the former nests, the occupants generally modestly retreated before the intruder, but on approaching the latter—the lazy ones, with absolutely nothing to boast about—they made an enormous fuss and rushed at you to bluff you away with their own prowess. It was laughable to watch how they pilfered stones from each other's nest; they are most shameless thieves. The thief slowly approaches the one he wishes to rob, with the most creditable air of nonchalance and disinterestedness, and if on getting close the other looks at him suspiciously, he will immediately gaze around most childlike and bland, and appear to be admiring the scenery. The assumption of innocence is perfect; but no sooner does the other look in a different direction, than he will dart down upon one of the pebbles of its nest and scamper away with it in his beak as fast as his little legs will bear his fat body. If the theft is

discovered, the injured party will give chase ; then all the kind and sympathetic neighbours rush in and rob to their hearts' desire !

" Woe to the foolish Penguin that rambles about in a restless fashion among the community ; before making his escape outside the circle he will have left behind a large quantity of his plumage, with which the others will feather their nests ; he must either have a home—*i.e.*, a nest—or keep quiet on the outside of the circle if he wishes to be left alone ; that is a *sine qua non* among them. The females generally fought whilst sitting in the nest by stretching out their necks and pecking at each other's tongues ; but the males fought in the orthodox and picturesque human fashion, with their arms—that is to say, their flippers—and their teeth—that is to say, their beaks. The pugilists stand erect, and deal each other resounding blows with their flippers, first one and then the other, with astonishing rapidity. When one is knocked down the beak of his opponent is brought into play, with no slight effect. The females rise from their nests and try to intervene and separate them, repeatedly getting between the combatants, and moving their heads rapidly from side to side in protestation. I have seen the females drive the least attractive fighter right out of the circle, but, quite unabashed, he would at once rush back to his antagonist, and the fray would commence again. These fights lasted as long as a quarter of an hour ; in fact, they were not terminated until one was completely conquered. The vanquished bird generally presented a pitiful appearance, being covered with gore and devoid of much of his plumage, and it took him several days to recover his equilibrium. The din that the thousands of Penguins made was deafening, and was like the roar of a vast multitude of people.

" The Antarctic Skua (*Megalestris maccormicki*) arrived on the same day as the Penguins, singly at first ; a few days after in great numbers. They are of a light brown colour and measure nearly 5 feet from tip to tip of the wings. Being of a most predatory nature, they played great havoc among the eggs and the young Penguins. Indeed, they may be said to live entirely upon them during the breeding season, for wherever there are Penguins the Skuas are not far away. On November the 2nd the Penguins commenced to lay their eggs. Two is the number laid, and an interval of three days elapses between the laying of the first and the second egg. They are white, and average from 2 to more than 3 inches in length, and from 1½ to 2 inches in breadth ; some are almost spherical in shape. The shell is thick, and the inside has a greenish tint. The yolk is comparatively small, the contents of the shell being mostly albumen. We collected some 4,000 of these eggs for dietary purposes and packed them in salt. They were a luxurious addition to our larder ; being utterly devoid of any strong flavour, they were greatly relished. The poor Penguins, when robbed, looked extremely disconsolate ; however, there was some consolation to be derived from the fact that we were not the only thieves, for a rapacious Skua would walk up to a Penguin in the most barefaced manner and extract the egg from underneath it. The eggs took exactly 31 days to incubate, the temperature beneath the bird being 70° and 80° Fahr. An actual observation with the thermometer placed alongside the eggs gave 72° Fahr.

" During the period of incubation absolutely no food of any kind was taken, but it was observed that large quantities of snow were frequently consumed. The first young appeared on 9th December. They were quaint little creatures, of a dark slaty colour, the darkest towards the head, and with dark feet and a dark rim around the eye, which subsequently changed into the spotless white circle of the parent bird ; they grew very rapidly, the dark legs at birth becoming in a few days quite pink. What a spirit of homeliness, peace, and industry existed among them ! There were no fights now. Indeed, the *paterfamilias* was much too engrossed to think

of fighting ; family responsibilities rested heavily upon him. Poor fellow, he was really to be pitied, he had to work so hard to satisfy the insatiable appetites of the family. Thousands and thousands of 'bread-winners' went fishing each day in the lanes of open water ; when filled with crustacea they return and disgorge into the open mouth of the youngster. This method of feeding the young was interesting. The baby places its head into the open mouth of the parent and devours the food forced up into the throat. By 18th January nearly all the young birds had discarded their downy coat, and been seduced to the water's edge and taught how to swim by their ever-attentive parents. Strange to say, all the young birds, unlike the older, had white throats ; evidently they do not acquire the dark throat until the first or second year."

"NESTS AND EGGS OF BIRDS FOUND BREEDING IN AUSTRALIA AND TASMANIA."

THE section of the Special Catalogue of the Australian Museum (Sydney) devoted to avi-fauna has reached Part III., which includes some of the family *Muscicapidæ*. Criticisms already published on Parts I. and II. (*Emu*, vol. i., p. 28, and vol. ii., p. 118) apply generally to the part at present under notice. In this instance the half-tone blocks are particularly good, whilst a decided and pleasing novelty is introduced in the shape of excellent pictures, from life, of fledglings—those of the Brown Flycatcher (*Microeca fascinans*) and White-shafted Fantail (*Rhipidura albiscapa*), the youngsters having been removed from the nest in the bush to the shades of the Australian Museum, where they were photographed, being afterwards returned to their solicitous parents. "Nine days after" (says Mr. North) "I saw one of them (White-shafted Fantail) being fed ; it had grown almost as large as the parent."

Sins of omission have again to be pointed out. They seem the characteristic of the work so far as issued, but it is with great reluctance that the reviewers refer to them. For instance, it would have greatly increased the value of the work had the author given the history, in addition to his descriptions, of the interesting and remarkable nests of the Fly-catchers—Kaup's (*Arses kaupi*), White-lored (*A. lorealis*), and Boat-billed (*Machærorhynchus flaviventer*), which he states are in the National Museum, Melbourne. Surely the author knows that the two last were figured in *The Ibis* (1897, p. 398, and 1898, p. 53, respectively), and were the type nests. The nest and eggs of the Broad-billed Fly-catcher (*Myiagra latirostris*) are not mentioned at all, although authenticated examples were found at Cape York, 20th December, 1896, and by so reliable a field collector as Mr. Harry Barnard. *Vide Ibis* (1898, p. 53). Again, a good description is furnished of the White-bellied Robin (*Eopsaltria georgiana*), but there is no mention of its nest and eggs ; hence an impression is conveyed that they were still undiscovered. Authenticated examples of these are recorded and figured in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*, vol. iii., p. 3 (1890), while one

of the co-type clutches of eggs is in the same museum where Mr. North saw the Fly-catchers' nests above-mentioned. This virtual misleading of the bird-student is to be deeply regretted, and as a doubt exists as to whether the White-bellied Robin was placed in its proper genus by Gould, the opinion of an expert of Mr. North's attainments would have been—had it been given—of value. A case in which records have been ignored or overlooked is in connection with the White-browed Robin (*Pæcilodryas superciliosa*). Here the author says he does not know on what authority the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Northern Territory have been recorded amongst the habitats of this species. His predecessor, as curator of the Australian Museum, was regarded by most ornithologists as an authority on such matters, and Mr. North will find "Port Darwin and Port Essington" given by Dr. E. P. Ramsay in his "List of Australian Birds"—*Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.*, vol. ii., p. 183 (1877).

Other examples might be cited to prove that, excellent as the work is from literary and artistic standpoints, it is either not a complete epitome of what Australian museums contain (Mr. North has gone beyond the limits of his own Australian Museum in Sydney in what on the title page is called a special catalogue of that institution), or that these collections and the accompanying information are lamentably incomplete. It is hard to believe that local observers and collectors have so far neglected their opportunities (ample proof to the contrary exists) as this work would lead one to infer, and what has been so far set forth by the author goes rather to prove that his splendid opportunities of studying contemporary bird literature and collections have not been availed of.

"PARRAKEETS."—Parts 4 and 5 of Mr. Seth-Smith's excellent handbook have been received. In the 4th number he includes the Crimson-winged, in Britain usually called the Red-winged. In our vernacular list this bird figures as the Crimson-winged Lory, which the author considers "an unfortunate designation for a species which is entirely distinct from the Loriidæ." The King Parrakeet (known to Australians as the King Lory (*Aprosmictus cyanopygius*) is described as well known to British aviculturists. The group to which it belongs (*Platycercinæ*), a purely Australian one, is described as having 11 or 12 of its species represented by living examples in Great Britain. Masters's and Crimson (Pennant's) Parrakeets and the Adelaide Parrakeet have full notices. The Yellow-bellied is said never to be offered for sale there. Of the Pale-headed Rosella, so well known in Queensland, an account is given of its nesting, and to the Blue-cheeked Parrakeet some space is devoted. Of the Smutty (Brown's) Parrakeet (*Platycercus browni*) and the Yellow Parrakeet (*P. flaveolus*) Mr. Goodchild furnishes excellent plates of male birds, which will afford students who have not the opportunity of

seeing living specimens an opportunity of observing how closely these species resemble each other in everything but the fact that the yellow in the second species replaces the red in the first.

The fifth part of this work should prove of exceptional interest to members of the Aust. O.U., since all the 15 species dealt with are from Australia. There are four fine coloured plates, depicting Barnard's, Bauer's (Port Lincoln), and the Many-coloured Parrakeets, from the pencil of Mr. Goodchild; Yellow-vented and Red-vented "Blue Bonnets" (Grönvold); and the Golden-shouldered Parrakeet (Renault). The text is, as usual, well worth perusal; but it is questionable whether the Red-backed Rosella (*Platycercus erythropeplus*) should have been included in Mr. Seth-Smith's book. Is it a valid species? It is certainly not known to Australian ornithologists. Mr. Seth-Smith mentions a pair as having bred in Britain, and Count Salvadori described a pair in the Zoological Gardens (London), but the probabilities are that it is a hybrid, as the species of the family to which it belongs are known to occasionally interbreed, and, the species being so closely related, hybrids between these birds would most likely prove fertile.

Correspondence.

AUST. O.U. OR AUSTRAL. O.U.?

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—The use of Aust. O.U. (Australasian Ornithologists' Union) so as to distinguish the abbreviation for our Union from the A.O.U. adopted by the American Ornithologists' Union, has led some of my friends to ask does Aust. O.U. mean "Austrian" Ornithologists' Union. Since Aust. O.U. is liable to be thus misconstrued, I would suggest that Austral. O.U. be a happier use of the abbreviation.—Yours, &c.,

A. MATTINGLEY.

Melbourne, 6/7/03.

VERNACULAR NAMES.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—With regard to a footnote in *The Emu*, vol. ii., No. 3, and the paper on vernacular names in last issue, I would like to make a few remarks.

It is obviously essential that we should all use the same systematic names, but so long as we do so, is it of very great importance what English names we use? What difference can it make if I speak of the Waxbill instead of the Red-browed Finch, or the Tomtit instead of the Yellow-rumped Tit, or the Red Lory instead of the Crimson Parrakeet, if I give the scientific names also; always supposing that the name has not been widely applied to any other Australian bird? And in the case of birds which are generally known by a particular name, of what use is it to