

year I witnessed another Eagle's death from strychnine. Three or four were circling leisurely around above a grassy slope, but how high in the air cannot be said, save that they were beyond the range of a shot-gun. All at once one of them, shutting its wings tight, fell head foremost like a stone to the earth, and, hurrying across, I found the Eagle quite dead. Whether its life went out with the first contraction of the wings or whether impact with the ground finished it are points that cannot be decided. Some thirty years ago I had the opportunity of a lifetime in noting an Eagle making a swoop to capture a hare that was hiding in a bunch of tussock grass on our sheep-run. Beyond question, it was a magnificent sight—in fact, no word-painting could give it accurately, for it was one of those things whose sublimity can only be realised by the eye. The bird when first observed might be one thousand paces distant, its altitude in the air two or three hundred yards. He swept forward with great speed—in short, I had never seen a Wedge-tail travelling so swiftly before. There was no flapping of wings. The whole performance was on a very gradually lowering line, whose terminus was a few feet directly above the game. On gaining that point he turned round, but before he accomplished that purpose, puss, springing from her cover, darted for a fence that had a 2-foot wall under its wires. The Eagle at once went in pursuit. The hare evaded him by running close to the wall—a favourite dodge with hares when chased by Wedge-tails. Eagles are now rare birds in the region where I was brought up. This clearance resulted from the free use of strychnine. Before the advent of that deadly poison our only means of coping with them were shot-guns, but if we had depended on them as engines of destruction Eagles would be plentiful now. In my boyhood's days they could be writ down exceedingly numerous. Some of the squatters had used iron dog-traps; one bird was shot minus a foot, which it was supposed to have left in the jaws of a trap. They are hard to kill with loose shot; if sitting with back towards the shooter their wings protect them, while if fired on directly in front it takes strong-going lead to reach vital parts. An overhead flying shot, I have found, is not effective.—ISAAC BATEY. Drouin, Victoria, 15th April, 1907.

Forgotten Feathers.

BY H. KENDALL, MELBOURNE.

NOMENCLATURE OF THE EMU.—Under the title "How the Australian Emu Came by its Vernacular Name," Mr. J. J. Fletcher, M.A., B.Sc., has rendered a great service to the ornithologists of Australia by recalling some "Forgotten Feathers." He has had facilities for examining early records which to many are a sealed book. Beginning with the arrival of Governor

Phillip, on 26th January, 1788, he cites many references to the bird which has given the title to our magazine. When *The Emu* was started the then editors consulted authorities versed in philology,* and, after receiving their opinions, decided that the vernacular and spelling adopted by the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science should be adhered to. Mr. Fletcher's citations justify this decision. From Captain Tench's "Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay, &c.," dated 1779, he quotes:—"The bird which principally claims attention is a species of Ostrich, apparently nearer to the Emu of South America than any other we know of," and gives the captain's description of physiological and structural details of the bird. Mr. Fletcher claims that the whole story of the nomenclature of the Emu rests on the possession by Captain Tench of a copy of Goldsmith's "Animated Nature" (a work consulted before the spelling of the name of this magazine was decided upon). In this work three species of *Struthera* are given—"under vernacular names only, as the Ostrich, the Emu, which many call the American Ostrich, and the Cassowary." He proceeds to say that Captain Tench and his colleagues held "a sort of scientific inquest upon the new bird." But Mr. Fletcher shows that Tench's account leaves us to draw our own conclusions upon two important matters—namely, exactly how the verdict that it was not the American Emu was arrived at, and whether their verdict was a unanimous one. The spelling of Emu was changed in subsequent English publications, in deference to British authorities, who possibly declined to recognise the bird as a new species, and thought it only a variety of the Cassowary. Captain Hunter, says Mr. Fletcher, is the only writer who uses the spelling Emew, but thinks that possibly this was due to a typographical error "which passed unnoticed." This theory is hardly tenable, as Prof. Newton, who has made a study of the word, uses by preference Emeu, a closely allied form, but one which, as has been pointed out by Mr. T. S. Hall, of the Melbourne University, is open to serious objections. When Prof. Tucker was consulted, he wrote:—"It appears to me that the pronunciation attached to the words was that of our Emu, and with the usual practice of early travellers, who were not phoneticists, the spelling was open to variation.* The current form in ancient times was not Emeu." Mr. Fletcher claims that the name "was not given in a haphazard way, but that it was the outcome of a genuine attempt to name the bird correctly," which, judging from many other authorities consulted, was undoubtedly done. Those who wish to pursue the subject should consult vol. i., p. 5, 1st January, 1907, of *The Australian Naturalist*, for the full text of Mr. Fletcher's paper.

* *The Emu*, vol. i., p. 5.