

between, and are filled with eggs (or rather 4 or 5 in a nest) *, making 50 to 100 eggs on a bush. The birds are packed together on these bushes as close as they can stand, till nothing of the bushes or ground between can be seen for them. It is a wonderful sight to one who has never seen it before. The young birds began coming out about three days ago, but some are still laying."—CONWAY M. MACKNIGHT, Surgeon. 24/11/01.

From Magazines.

"REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE AUSTRALASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE, HELD AT MELBOURNE, 1900."—In connection with this volume, which has just been issued, it is to be regretted that for the want of the necessary funds the following papers are recorded only, and not published, viz. :—"Protective Colouration of Australian Birds and their Nests," and "Variation in the Colour of Australian Birds' Eggs," both by Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S. ; "Notes on Some Desert Birds," by Mr. G. A. Keartland ; "Notes on a Collection of Birds from Western Australia," by Mr. R. Hall ; and "Reserve Fertility of Birds," by Mr. A. Sutherland, M.A. The loss of publicity of these interesting articles emphasizes the necessity for the existence of such a purely ornithological journal as *The Emu*.

While on the subject of the last Melbourne Congress of the A. A. A. S. it was perhaps an error of judgment in the "Hand-book" to have furnished old and obsolete names with such excellent descriptive matter as that on the "Birds of the Melbourne District." This is all the more remarkable seeing that at the previous (Sydney) meeting a "List" of Australian birds' names, both technical and vernacular, was adopted by the Association and afterwards published.

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A NICE POINT.—At the Sale police court four lads were charged with being in possession of Swans' eggs, contrary to the provisions of the *Game Act*. The first case was that of George Palethorpe, who pleaded guilty to having 55 eggs in his possession. He was fined 1s. for each egg, or 55s. in all. The other three defendants, who were in company with Palethorpe, were defended by Mr. G. Wise, who objected that, as Palethorpe had been convicted of having the 55 eggs, the other defendants could not also be convicted for having them. Mr. Cresswell, P.M., said the objection was fatal, and dismissed the cases against the three, adding that if they had all been charged collectively they would have been convicted.—*The Argus*, 20/7/01.

* Usual complement 2 to 4. — EDS.

THEOLOGY AND ORNITHOLOGY.—Missionaries, although they have often good opportunities, are, as a rule, poor natural history collectors. A notable exception is mentioned in the Presbyterian *Messenger* of 4th October last. Some Roman Catholic missionaries in Shen-si, a remote inland province of China, happen to be men with a turn for ornithology. The museum at South Kensington has recently been the recipient of a case of birds collected by these ardent naturalists during the continuance of the Boxer outbreak of last year.

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AN EXAMPLE FOR THE AUSTRALASIAN O.U.—American milliners are likely to cause the extermination of sea birds, especially Gulls and Terns, on the coast of the United States, and as Gulls are useful scavengers, as well as a charm of the seaside, the committee of the American Ornithologists' Union has undertaken to guard and protect their nurseries.

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A SOUTH AMERICAN "SPARROW."—The strange table-land of Mount Roraima, in British Guiana, which is some 8,700 feet above sea level, has been visited for the second time by Messrs. F. V. M'Connell and J. J. Quelch on a collecting expedition. The only bird noted is a new species of *Zonotrichia* (*Z. macconnelli*). A coloured plate in the Trans. Lin. Soc. (vol. viii., part 2) figures this new member of what Darwin (*Journal of Researches*) called the "Sparrows" of South America, as well as *Z. pileata*, from which Dr. Sharpe says it is distinguished by being "a larger and darker bird, much greyer, and with the rump and flanks dark grey instead of brown." Were Sparrows here as handsome many would forgive their introducer.

Review.

[*"The Birds of Siberia: a Record of a Naturalist's Visit to the Valleys of the Petchora and Yenesei."* By Henry Seebohm, F.L.S., F.Z.S., F.R.G.S. With map and illustrations. London: John Murray, Albemarle-street, 1901.]

THIS interesting volume contains the narrative of the late Mr. Seebohm's two Siberian expeditions—the first undertaken in 1875, in company with Mr. J. A. Harvie-Brown, to the valley of the Petchora River; the other to the River Yenesei, in 1877, when he had for a companion Capt. Wiggins, the well-known Siberian navigator. The results of these journeys were published in *"Siberia in Europe"* (1880) and *"Siberia in Asia"* (1882) respectively. Both these works having passed out of print, it was arranged to combine them in one volume.

The work is of peculiar value to Australians, because many Australian migratory birds to and from high northern latitudes

are mentioned. Besides it is written in an easy and unconventional style, free from technicalities. Perhaps the most interesting portion is Part II.—the Yenesei journey—in which the author sledged (it being winter) 3,240 miles, from Nishni Novgorod, in Russia, to the Kureika, an affluent of the Yenesei, just within the Arctic Circle. Including stoppages, the journey occupied 46 days, during which nearly 1,000 horses, 9 score of dogs, and two score of reindeer were used, the total number of stages being 229.

When the winter broke up Mr. Seebohm, a servant whom he hired on the way, and the captain proceeded from the Kureika to Golchika, at the mouth of the Yenesei. The break-up of winter is most graphically described, spring—or a leap from winter to summer—lasting just 14 days.

The field notes of birds recorded throughout the journey, especially during the summer months, are most fascinating, and could have only been penned by one brimful of enthusiasm, and with an extraordinary capacity for hard work. An example of the author's perseverance is the fact that for two days in succession he worked amongst the swamps and mosquitos for 20 hours out of the 24—literally all day, because the "midnight" sun did not set at that season of the year.

On the 5th June Seebohm shot a species which he had never seen in the flesh before—the Asiatic Golden Plover, the variety that migrates to Australasian quarters. (The month following he saw many more and discovered their nests.) The next day he secured another Australian bird, the Terek Sandpiper. Then followed more specimens of the Common Sandpiper. Subsequently in the "full flood" of migration (as well as of the river), Curlew Sandpipers in splendid breeding plumage, Cuckoos (*C. intermedius*), Shoveller (European) Ducks, and other wanderers were obtained.

Besides being an ornithologist of great repute, Seebohm was a keen oologist. Under date of 23rd June he wrote:—

"My fourth important observation this morning was, however, the most valuable of all—in fact, by it I obtained one of the special objects of my journey. As I was making my way downhill to the boat amongst tangled underwood and fallen tree-trunks, rotten and moss-grown, a little bird started up out of the grass at my feet. It did not fly away, but flitted from branch to branch within six feet of me. I knew at once that it must have a nest near at hand, and in a quarter of a minute I found it, half-hidden in the grass and moss. It contained five eggs. The bird was the Little Bunting. It seemed a shame to shoot the poor little thing, but the five eggs were, as far as I knew, the only authenticated eggs of this species hitherto obtained, therefore it was necessary for their complete identification."

Touching another rare species which he was obliged to shoot for identification, Seebohm wrote—"It seems too bad to shoot these charming little birds, but as the 'Old Bushman' [referring to the late Mr. H. W. Wheelwright, who was camped at Mordi-

alloc, Victoria, in the early fifties collecting—EDS.] says, what is *hit* is *history*, and what is *missed* is *mystery*."

He might well grow enthusiastic on such an occasion as this :—

"Suddenly a Thrush flew off its nest with a loud cry, and alighted in a tree within easy shot. I glanced at the nest, snapped a cap at the bird with one barrel, and brought her to the ground in a second. I picked her up, expecting to find a Redwing, but was surprised and delighted to find the rare Dark Ouzel. I lost no time in climbing the tree, and had the pleasure of bringing down the nest with five eggs—so far as I know the first authenticated eggs of this species ever taken."

An ornithologist's paradise is thus described—time, midnight, 12th July :—

"We climbed up the steep bank (of the Yenesei) and found ourselves in a wild looking country, full of lakes, swamps, and rivers, dead flat in some places, in others undulating, even hilly. This was the true Siberian tundra, brilliant with flowers, swarming with mosquitos, and *ful of birds*."

There is no naturalist's expedition, however successful, but begets idle regrets. Notwithstanding the mass of material (over 1,000 skins), and the amount of information obtained, the author of the "Birds of Siberia" concludes thus :—

"I now bade adieu to the tundra, with feelings somewhat akin to disappointment and regret. My trip might be considered almost a failure, since I had not succeeded in obtaining eggs either of the Knot, Sanderling, or Curlew Sandpiper. Nevertheless I was glad to turn my face homewards."

About Members.

IT is understood that Mr. A. W. Milligan has been appointed "Honorary Ornithologist" to the Perth Museum.

Amongst the original members and founders of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union are six members of the British Ornithologists' Union, namely :—Mr. J. J. Dalglish (Scotland), Mr. C. W. De Vis (Queensland), Col. Legge (Tasmania), Mr. D. Le Souëf (Victoria), Mr. J. C. M'Lean (New Zealand), and Prof. Newton (England).

Mr. Clarence Smart, with two of his cousins, spent a pleasant fortnight in November, camped on the Gippsland Lakes. Over 100 species of birds were identified, but only six were secured as new for his collection, including the Black-faced or Carinated Fly-catcher and the Sanguineous Honey-eater. Mr. Smart reports that the latter was fairly numerous in some of the dense gullies running down to the Lakes.

The Furneaux Group of Islands was visited in the latter part of November by a party of members, consisting of Dr. C. Ryan, Mr. R. B. Ritchie, Mr. D. Le Souëf, and Mr. C. F. Belcher.