

## The Haunt of the Lyre-Bird.

BY A. C. STONE, R.A.O.U., MELBOURNE.

ON a fine day we traversed dense fern gullies in the Dandenong Ranges (Vic.) in quest of the Lyre-Bird (*Menura victoriae*). A rough track took us a good distance up a hill-side, where we diverged into the forest. The view changed at almost every step—now through the trees, where a glimpse was obtained of the waters of Western Port Bay, many miles distant. then we were again so completely shut in by giant tree-ferns that the light became dim. Here was a sight to delight the nature-lover. Tree-ferns, from a foot to 30 feet high, spreading out their feathery tops in all their soft and glorious greenery, no two angles of growth being the same. Some ferns were almost upright, while the crowns of others were two feet or less from the ground. Lying on the ground were thousands of fern-tree trunks, covered in lesser plants.

Interspersed with the fern-trees were myrtle, musk, and sassafras trees, and huge eucalypts towering over all, to a height of 200 feet at least, and with a circumference of 40 feet at six feet from the ground. Some of these trunks bore the marks of stone axes, where aborigines had cut toe-holes to enable them to climb the tree in pursuit of possums (phalangers). This spot is the home of the Lyre-Bird, the Pilot-Bird (*Pycnoptilus floccosus*), the Rose-breasted Robiu (*Petroica rosea*), and other species.

Up the tiny creeks the "going" is particularly strenuous owing to the denser and darker growth, and the scrambles over or under slippery fallen trees and ferns. But we cheerfully overcome these difficulties, for here is the place where the nest of the Lyre-Bird may be found, and here our real search begins. The nest is sometimes placed many feet from the ground, on a leaning tree-trunk, but more often on the bank of a creek. After a prolonged search we were rewarded by finding a nest of the previous season, and one much older. Suddenly from the hillside in some thick timber and bracken came the call, "Blick, blick," instantly recognized as the natural notes of the Lyre-Bird.

Proceeding very quietly, we were able to approach to within 30 feet of the bird, which proved to be a fine male, standing on a branch several feet from the ground. Keeping perfectly quiet, we were delighted to hear him mimic the beautiful notes of the Grey Shrike-Thrush (*Colluricincla harmonica*), the laugh of the Great Brown Kingfisher (*Daedelo gigas*), the plaintive cry of the White-browed Scrub-Wren (*Sericornis frontalis*), the "Guinea-a-week" of the male Pilot-Bird, and the reply of the female, the crack of the male and female Coachwhip-Bird (*Psophodes crepitans*), the raucous note of the Gang-Gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon galeatum*), the flute-like carol of the White-backed Magpie (*Gymnorhina leuconota*), the song of the Collared Butcher-Bird (*Craicticus destructor*), the screech of the Crimson Parrot (*Platycercus pennanti*), the song of the Yellow-breasted Whistler (*Pachy-*



Lyre-Bird's Nest in Tree-Fern.

*cephala gutturalis*), and the "Wee chup" of the White-eared Honey-eater (*Ptilotis leucotis*). We listened for more than 15 minutes, and the mimicking continued during that time, but was interspersed with the bird's own notes and others that we could not identify. This was a very good performance for one bird, and we were sorry when it ended, and the bird disappeared amid the undergrowth.

Feeling sure that there was a new nest somewhere in the locality, we again turned to the creek, passing one of the Lyre-Bird's dancing mounds four or five feet in diameter. Reaching



Nest of Lyre-Bird.

FROM A PHOTO. BY A. C. STONE, R.A.O.U.

the creek, a prolonged search was made, and at last the nest was found. It was over two feet in diameter, made of sticks and twigs, and lined with the fibrous matter from fern-tree trunks and finished with the breast feathers of the bird. It contained an egg. The opening at the side faced the creek. The bird had broken off some staghorn fern fronds and placed them on top of the nest.

One season a nest containing a young Lyre-Bird about four days old was found. The female bird remained within a foot or two during the time the observers were near the nest. The light was dull, and it was not possible to obtain a good photograph, as the bird was in motion the whole time.