

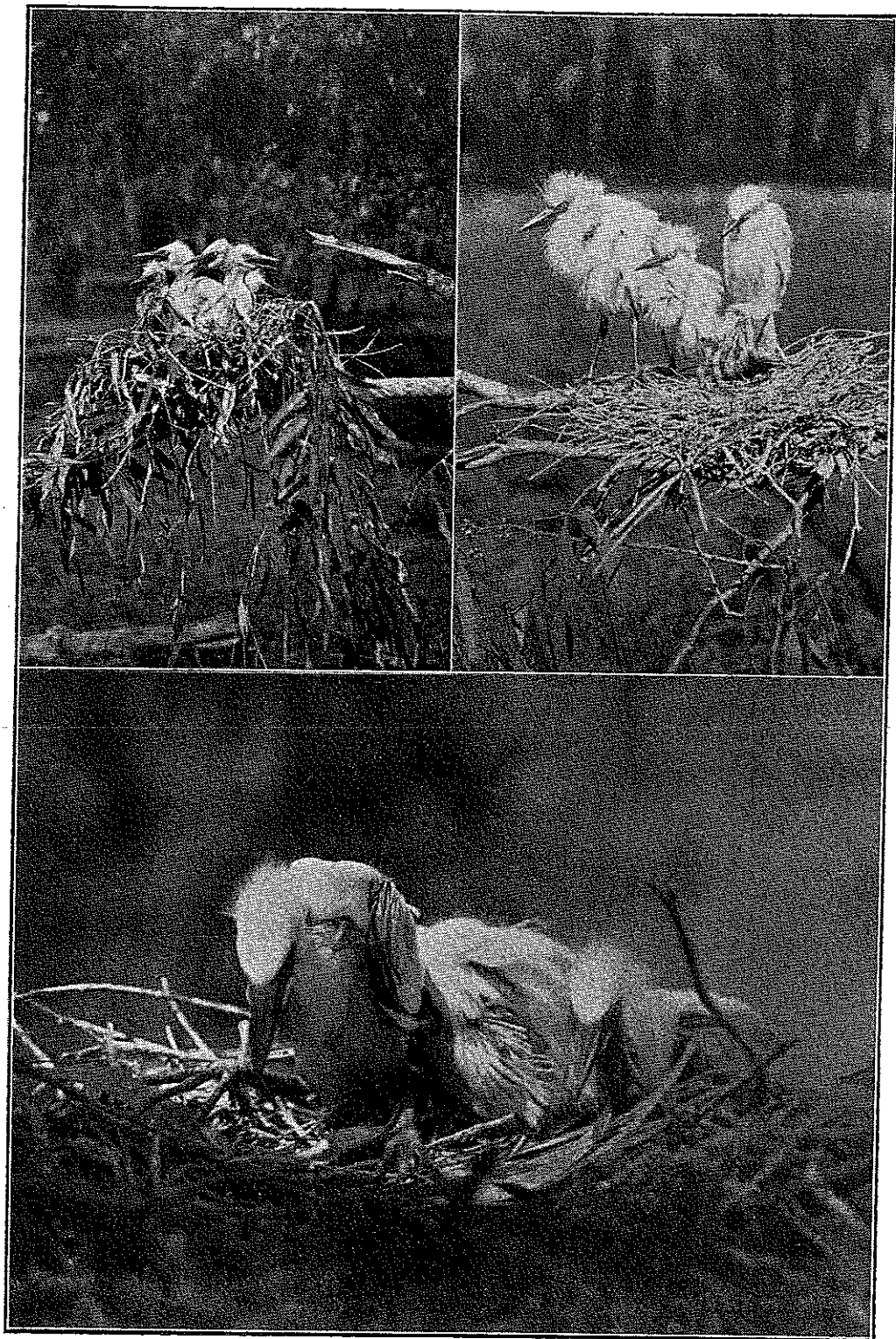
nests were reached; some contained only one egg, others two, and a few three and four delicately tinged greenish-blue eggs, somewhat larger than the little Plumed Egret's eggs. In the centre of this heronry a pair of Black-cheeked Falcons (*Falco melanogenys*) had their nest, and no doubt some broods of ducklings paid them toll until such times as the young Herons were hatched, when, no doubt, the Falcons preyed upon them, and perhaps their parents too! As yet no young Herons of the several species in the rookery were hatched, but that "black demon" and thief, the Raven (*Corone australis*) was in evidence, as with maniacal "Caw-caw-car-r-r" he hovered about the heronry and robbed the birds of their eggs systematically when the Herons left them unguarded, judging by the broken eggshells seen floating on the water beneath the trees. The day being now half over, we repair to the White Egrets' rookery and climb several trees with nests, some of which contained either three or four eggs, which appeared to be the full clutch of both the Plumed Egret (*Mesophoyx plumifera*) and the large White Egret (*Herodias timoriensis*), which birds we found nesting close together. A few Little Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax melanoleucus*) also were seen on their nests in a tall tree in the heronry, and harmonious relations apparently existed between them and the Plumed Egrets, which also occupied the same tree. Photos. having been taken in the limited time at my disposal—all too short to do justice to the subject—we return to camp.

Plundered for their Plumes.

BY A. H. E. MATTINGLEY, MELBOURNE.

IN a previous paper* I gave an account of a visit to heronries, protographing nests, &c. Notwithstanding the extreme heat, and being companionless except for myriads of mosquitoes, I determined to revisit the locality again during my Christmas holidays, in order to obtain one picture only—namely, that of a "White Crane" or Egret feeding its young. I had some difficulty locally in getting a man to assist me with the boat, which had to be paddled about 12 miles to reach the heronry. When near the place we could see some large patches of white, either floating in the water or reclining on the fallen trees in the vicinity of the Egrets' rookery. This set me speculating as to the cause of this unusual sight. As we drew nearer, what a spectacle met our gaze—a sight that made my blood fairly boil with indignation. There, strewn on the floating water-weed, and also on adjacent logs, were at least 50 carcasses of large White and smaller Plumed Egrets—nearly one-third of the rookery, perhaps more—the birds having been shot off their nests

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Starveling Egrets (Parents Shot for their Plumes).
Young (*plumifera*) Calling to Passing Herons for Food. Waiting for the End.
Young (*timoriensis*) All But Dead.

FROM PHOTOS. BY A. H. E. MATTINGLEY.

containing young. What a holocaust! Plundered for their plumes. What a monument of human callousness! There were 50 birds ruthlessly destroyed, besides their young (about 200) left to die of starvation! This last fact was betokened by at least 70 carcasses of the nestlings, which had become so weak that their legs had refused to support them, and they had fallen from the nests into the water below and had been miserably drowned; whilst in the trees above, the remainder of the parentless young ones could be seen staggering in the nests, some of them falling with a splash into the water as their waning strength left them too exhausted to hold on any longer, whilst others simply stretched themselves out on the nest and so expired. Others, again, were seen trying in vain to attract the attention of passing Egrets which were flying with food in their bills to feed their own young, and it was a pitiful sight indeed to see these starvelings with outstretched necks and gaping bills imploring the passing birds to feed them. What a sickening sight! how my heart ached for them. How could anyone but a cold-blooded, callous monster destroy in this wholesale manner such beautiful birds, the embodiment of all that is pure, graceful, and good.

In one tree at the heronry the nests of the Plumed Egret (*Mesophoyx plumifera*), Egret (*Herodias timoriensis*), and Little Cormorant were seen. In another large tree a photo. was taken of two young Plumed Egrets and one young large Egret together in the same nest. These three birds were the sole survivors of several broods of both species which had nested together in the same tree. They had evidently sought one another's company because all the balance of the nestlings had expired through lack of nourishment, their parents having been shot by the plume-hunters, or, rather, "plume-plunderers." Not satisfied with pictures of these nestlings, whose skin was a peculiar leafy-green colour, I determined to try to get a further series, and having found another tree containing several Little Cormorants' nests, intermingled with those of the Plumed Egret, I donned the climbing irons, to save the time necessary to adjust the rope ladder, and commenced climbing up the bulky trunk of the red gum tree, which became as I ascended more and more unsuitable for climbing with the irons. After scrambling about 25 feet up the trunk, my arms being at full stretch across the tree-barrel, I suddenly felt an acute pain in the back of my hand, which became almost paralysed. It appears that I had knocked off the tree-trunk the nest of a hornet, which forthwith retaliated on me. The sudden shock of the sting almost caused me to let go my flimsy hold. However, during the next step upwards my climbing irons slipping, and my right hand, paralysed by the hornet's sting, refusing to grip some bark, which was the only hand-hold available, I fell down "swash" into the water below

I was unhurt by the fall, thanks to the water, but I received a few scratches from the tree, principally about the wrists. My clothes were damped, but not my ardour, and I managed to send up the rope ladder, and re-ascended the tree, where I secured another snap-shot of the poor starvelings from a precarious coign of vantage.

Nesting Place of Australian Swifts.

BY D. LE SOUËF, C.M.Z.S., &c., MELBOURNE.

WHEN visiting Japan lately (25/7/07) in company with our member, Mr. R. A. D. Hood, I was enabled to visit the Kegon Waterfall, near Nikko. It is a beautiful cascade of about 270 feet in height and a considerable amount of water also comes out from the apparently conglomerate rock lying under the harder slate-like formation. We were told that in winter it almost ceased running. It drains the Chuzenji Lake, which is about half a mile away, and 4,375 feet above sea-level.

We were pleased to see many Spine-tailed (*Chaetura caudacuta*) and White-rumped Swifts (*Micropus pacificus*) circling round in the precipitous gorge beneath us, both close to the falling water and further down. Later, towards evening, they hunted for their winged prey well above the gorge. We noticed single birds every now and again darting down towards the overhanging wall of rock to a place under a jagged ledge (marked with a white cross in the photo.), and, bringing our strong field-glasses to bear on the spot, were delighted in being able to clearly distinguish three nests of the Spine-tailed Swifts. The White-rumped Swifts seemed to dart into holes or crevices, where they evidently had their nests, but we could not distinguish them. Of the three nests of the larger bird, two contained young, which we saw the parents feeding, and when so doing they clung on to the side of the nest for a brief moment; while the third had a bird sitting. The nests were large, and made of mud, evidently of two or three colours, and were built on a sloping wall of rock well under cover, thus—

As far as we could judge from the distance we were (about 150 yards) a nest is about a foot in depth externally by about 4 inches across on the top; the cup or egg cavity was evidently shallow, as the sitting bird was well exposed. We asked the natives living near if they had ever seen the birds roosting at night; they said "No," and had never seen them resting except when clinging to the sides of the cliff where their nests were built.

We were informed that when the young had all left their nests, and just before the annual migration commences to Australia, about the latter part of September and early in October,

