

enough to visit the Nile Valley. There are 51 coloured plates, and brief popular descriptions of no fewer than 356 species of birds. The plates are excellently reproduced, though the colours in some instances are displeasing. They form a charming portrait gallery of Egypt's avifauna. Perhaps the most artistic are those depicting the Black-and-White Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), Kites in flight, and Buff-back Herons (*Ardeola russofa*). All the illustrations are from original water-colour drawings. Mr. Whympers, during his visits to Egypt, was given special facilities for obtaining information and carrying out his pleasant task of portraying the bird life of the country. The results he has obtained are deserving of all praise.

But if Mr. Whympers is an accomplished artist he has not the gift of writing to an equal degree. There is no magic in his descriptions of the beautiful creatures which his brush has so finely portrayed. Perhaps he did not seek after the style which makes the essays of Burroughs and Hudson so delightful to read. As he says, he wrote the book to aid visitors to the land of the Pharaohs to identify the birds seen, and in this purpose he has succeeded admirably. Here is a sample of the text, picked at random :—

"We will spare the reader a detailed *menu* of this omnivorous bird (the Kite), but all who visit Egypt ought to bless it, as, until some enlightened system of sanitation is adopted, this bird, almost unaided, makes the land possible to live in, or to be visited with any safety or pleasure. If it were exterminated, as the Kites have been in Great Britain, it is almost impossible to exaggerate what would be the dire results to the health of the newcomers to this old Eastern country. Mercifully there seems no sort of chance of its numbers decreasing. Indeed, in 1908 I saw, behind the New Winter Palace Hotel at Luxor, a flock which certainly ran into hundreds; two dead donkeys, thrown out behind the walls of the hotel grounds, were the cause of this vast congregation."

The author states that the birds in Egypt are very tame and admit of close inspection. He does not know why this should be so, as the land "teems with foxes, jackals, Kites, Vultures, Eagles, Falcons, and Hawks without end, all with an eye to business." And there are hosts of "demon boys" to harry the wild things.

Correspondence.

PROTECTION AND PRIORITY.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

DEAR SIRs,—Would you kindly inform me if any steps have been taken, or are contemplated, to check the exportation of protected birds from New South Wales and Queensland. I have means of knowing that large numbers of a variety of species are shipped from different ports of the above States

almost every week. The bulk are destined to spend a short and unhappy life in small cages.

The fact has been stated in the public press, both by advertisement and news paragraph, that certain islands in Bass Strait have been proclaimed sanctuaries where sea-fowl may (yachting parties willing) breed undisturbed. What I and others would like to ascertain, if possible, is what steps are taken to enforce the proclamation, as the mere fact of the islands being gazetted has no deterrent effect on parties in sailing craft, who, when on a holiday cruise, destroy everything that moves, and call it "sport." The above stricture does not apply to all yachting parties, but to many. I had ocular demonstration of that of which I speak only last Christmas.

The third matter on which I desire to speak is in connection with the proposed A.O.U. "Check List." As one who has taken up ornithology as a pleasant and instructive hobby to follow in one's spare moments—and I think the majority of the members of the A.O.U. do the same—I sincerely hope the committee will not allow their zeal to get the better of their discretion regarding priority. Priority is all very well in its way, but it can be carried too far. In *The Emu* (vol. vi., p. 28) a short extract is given of some remarks on "Priority in Nomenclature" by the President of the Bavarian Ornithological Society. The first sentence of the extract reads:—"He believed" (runs the report) "that all these changings of long-established names, even when the alteration was justifiable, should be most rigorously guarded against, as the greatest confusion would be the only result." This is the case in a nutshell. If my memory serves me right, the senior editor of *The Emu* has expressed himself in even stronger terms concerning the action of modern makers of ornithological books and hand-lists in raking up the dead and forgotten past, so far as obsolete names are concerned, in search of cheap notoriety. The bulk of ornithological students (using the word in its widest sense) have neither time nor inclination to unlearn much already learnt regarding scientific designations. The nomenclature as employed in the British Museum Catalogue, and on which I presume the 1898 A.A.A.S. "Vernacular List" was founded, is good enough for most of us, and with which we have become familiar until names once outlandish and strange have become "familiar in our mouths as household words" almost. If priority were carried to its logical conclusion in everything we should be landed in some queer messes. If *Graucalus* is to be *Coracina*, why not "New Holland" for "Australia," or "Van Diemen's Land" for "Tasmania," as according to the law of priority the former names should stand? I could multiply instances of reversions, but these illustrations will suffice.—I am, &c.,

Launceston, 28/1/10.

FRANK M. LITTLER.