

described. Night birds seem conspicuous by their absence, and I fancy there can be but few, if any, on the island. A gentleman who has lived on the island for years tells me that he has only seen two Owls during his residence here. Of course the terrible fever of destroying must possess him, and although the poor birds had taken up their abode on his home he destroyed them for the sheer sake of killing. I have shot several Kingfishers here. One species, a very small one, but a most elegant bird, keeps very closely to the reeds and rushes and it is with great difficulty one can get them out. Strange to say, although Hornbills are fairly plentiful on the coast, not one species is to be found on the island. Possibly I should say I have not come across any and cannot get any information relating to them. I shot a very pretty little Kite, which seems to me to resemble our Black-shouldered variety, but might be the one described by Sharpe as the Blue Kite. I came across several large waterholes in the forests, many of which were half a mile long, generally not more than 200 yards wide, but in many places very deep. The lily plants growing in—in fact, covering—these waterholes were very fine; leaves two feet across, and the beautiful rich blue flowers the size of large tea-cups, the banks being fringed by high rushes. I could not induce the natives to go into these holes and had at last to go in myself. Still I have been rewarded, for I shot several strange water birds, a beautiful little Red-headed Duck, a very small Bittern, and several Nankeen Herons, as well as the African Jacana; also a Water-Crake like our Little Crake of Australia. It must suffice to say that I have shot about 100 birds on the island, of about 40 species, and have collected some fine bats and mammals, also flies, so you can see I am not idle. Am now about to start for the German East Coast again and make another attempt to go as far north as Lamu, to collect Waders in deep lakes and marshes there; then to work in to Lake Victoria Nyanza, and do Madagascar on my return.—S. A. WHITE. Zanzibar, East Africa, 24/8/03.

[Captain White has taken many photographs during his African travels. He sends one depicting a number of swarthy natives pushing his little ship through the surf at Zanzibar, preparatory to sailing for an island seldom visited.—EDS.]

### From Magazines, &c.

IN *The Croydon Mining News* (14/8/03) a correspondent gives the following important information on the usefulness of the much-abused Crows in the Gulf of Carpentaria district:—"The most wonderful thing I have seen, and which I feel almost certain bids fair to put an entirely new aspect on the tick question, is the game the Crows are playing up here. I saw four instances of it in a journey of 40 miles, and the last clearly defined illustration, within a mile of the Vanrook homestead, amongst what I

presume were a quiet milkers' (one-mile) lot, which let me get up close and thoroughly watch the game. A flock of about 50 or 60 Crows flew down on to the cattle. The latter suddenly stood still, and seemed to enjoy the operation which followed, the old Crows completely cleaning them of ticks. Some stood on the backs, picking down the sides of the beasts as far as they could reach. Others ran down the tails and worked in under the hams and udders of the cows, while others remained on the ground, waiting to snatch up any ticks that fell from the operations of the workers above. I watched them for a considerable time, and eventually, after they had apparently exhausted the supply on that particular mob, the Crows took flight. I then got close to the cattle to see how much good they had done, and I was surprised. On mentioning the matter to the station hands two of them said they had seen the Crows only recently at the game I have described, and they can verify what I have stated. The ticks they eat are, of course, the big female variety, who, when they drop off, breed young ticks by the thousand, as has been proved."

\* \* \*

*The Avicultural Magazine.*—Recent numbers of this magazine contain (July, vol. i., No. 9) a good plate of the Varied Lorikeet by Mr. Goodchild, with interesting letterpress by Mr. Reginald Phillipps, who on 15/11/02 secured a pair. His experience proves that the "Red-crowned bird is the female," and the artist corroborates this opinion—one which runs counter to the idea that male birds usually have the showiest plumage. An interesting note from a member of the Aust. O.U. (Mr. F. L. Berney) is embodied in the article. Mr. Grönvold figures the Greater Button Quail (*Turnix tanki*) in the August number. This is more gaily decorated than most of our Australian species, and ranges, according to Mr. Seth-Smith, "from Spain, Sicily, and through Africa, Madagascar, the Indian Archipelago, China, and *Australia*" (?). This is another instance in bird life in which the female is more brightly coloured than the male. She is also the larger of the pair. Another item worth recording as to the pair which the author had in captivity and under close observation is a reversal of the usual procedure of gallinaceous birds. Instead of the male picking up dainty morsels and presenting them to the "wife," in this species the order is, to use Mr. Seth-Smith's own words, "exactly reversed, the females unselfishly presenting the most attractive morsels to their husbands." The male sat on the eggs, which hatched on the 12th day, and looked after the chicks most assiduously, the mother ignoring all her responsibilities in this matter.

\* \* \*

PROTECTION OF PELICANS.—The following letter by Mr. J. W. Mellor, hon. secretary S.A. Ornithological Association, appeared in the *Adelaide Register* of 28th October last:—

"A movement is on foot to remove the partial protection afforded to certain of our native birds by the *Birds Protection Act*, notably our Australian Pelican, and also to go a step further and pay so much per head for their destruction. Some years ago, when these birds were numerous and nested on Kangaroo Island and elsewhere, they were placed on the unprotected list; but, owing to their becoming less in later years, they were removed to the partially protected list to save them being totally exterminated, as they are year by year getting fewer, being exposed to the marksmanship of the ever-increasing rifle, whose accuracy is becoming more and more like perfection; and the birds themselves, swimming as they do high on the water, make an excellent target for the 'pot shooter.' The advance of civilization and the gun has driven the birds from Kangaroo Island and elsewhere, with the consequence that they have only one breeding spot in South Australia. This, too, is very small, and year by year decreasing; and with the assistance now proposed there is every likelihood of their soon becoming extinct. This is a pity, seeing that the species is peculiar to Australia. The increase of these birds is but limited when compared with many others. The number of eggs laid in a clutch is only two, and they have not more than one clutch during the year; so that, with the various causes for mortality surrounding the incubation and rearing of the young, they do not average a pair of young to every pair of parent birds. Many may ask—'Why make such a fuss about them? What good are they? Are they of any use for food? Do they not eat a lot of fish?' Well, many other birds seem equally useless so far as man's little conception is concerned. Take, for instance, the Emu, Cassowary, &c. But who would like to see them exterminated? We are often rather short-sighted when dealing with Nature's provisions, and 'do not miss the water till the well runs dry.' So it will be with many of our native birds if care be not exercised. I do not wish to state that they eat no fish, as that is to a great extent their food, but the number they use in this way is small when compared with other means of destruction, and I think that Nature has provided abundance and to spare for these and other birds, and, with proper management, for man as well. But if man abuses, why should the birds be blamed? It is rather absurd and short-sighted to shunt upon something else the misconduct of men who indiscriminately catch all sizes of fish, but more small than large; and, rather than throw the small ones back into the water to grow larger, save them and send them into the market. It is a known fact that hundreds and thousands of Murray cod are sent into the various markets though they weigh only a few pounds each, whereas they should turn the scale at 20, 30, or 40 lbs. More stringent means should be used to remedy this abuse in a better close season for the fish, and fines inflicted should a fish under a certain weight be killed. Last year Murray cod were plentiful. A fisherman of Goolwa said in *The Register* of 14th March of last year that they were so abundant that prices fell from 6d. to 2d. and even 1d. per lb., and the fisherman could not get sufficient boxes to put the fish in to send them to the markets. Now, with the continual decrease of Pelicans, is it not absurd to suppose that since last year's plentiful supply the Pelicans have 'wiped out' the cod? It points more to the fact that the fishermen caught excessively large quantities, and diminished the breeding stock too much; or, failing this, there are with fish, as well as other things, some seasons when breeding is not so prolific as in others. This being the case, it is a pity to destroy one of our distinct species of birds."

## Review.

### PARRAKEETS.

[Parrakeets; being a Practical Handbook to Those Species Kept in Captivity. By David Seth-Smith, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U. London: R. H. Porter, 7 Prince's-street, Cavendish Square W. (Pp. 1-281, with indices, contents, and appendix.)]

THE sixth number of this admirable work is to hand, and completes a book in which, as the author in his preface says, "it has been the aim . . . to make . . . a complete monograph of the imported species of Parrakeets." The three coloured plates in the issue now noticed are up to the standard of those in previous parts. The birds figured are the Splendid Grass-Parrakeet (*Neophema splendida*), the Turquoise or Chestnut-shouldered Grass-Parrakeet (*N. pulchella*), the Golden-fronted New Zealand Parrakeet (*Cyanorhamphus auriceps*), the Antipodes Island Parrakeet (*C. unicolor*), and the Varied Lorieet (*Ptilosclera versicolor*), all from the pencil of Mr. H. Goodchild. In depicting the last-named species the artist has doubtless placed pictorial effect before scientific accuracy. The withered lemon colour of the eucalyptus blossoms, and of the midribs of the leaves employed, to say nothing of the peculiar blue of the leaves, would be hard to match in Australia, which was once supposed to be the home of this botanical genus. The "systematic index" shows that some 130 species of a family in which, "scientifically speaking, there is no difference between a 'Parrot' and a 'Parrakeet'" have been dealt with, and by an appendix British information on the subject is brought up to date. In the appendix Mr. Seth-Smith says of a specimen of Masters Parrakeet—"The only difference I could detect between this bird and a Pennant . . . was in the yellow centres to some of the tail feathers;" and, as to the Red-mantled Parrakeet, he quotes from Mr. Johnstone, who, in August, 1903, records that two fine Red-mantled Parrakeets had been "bred from a cock Pennant and a hen Red Rosella." Still later, in a letter to Mr. A. J. Campbell, just received, the author of the book under review writes:—"I am now perfectly convinced that *Platycercus erythropeplus* of Salvadori is a hybrid between *P. eximius* and *P. elegans*, and that *P. mastersianus* is merely a sickly variety of *P. elegans*." Australasian ornithologists have always been doubtful as to the validity of these species, and will now be more confirmed in their opinion. The complete work of Mr. Seth-Smith is offered by the publisher, bound in art linen, gilt top, at 40s.

### About Members.

WE heartily welcome Mr. Thomas Carter (late of Point Cloates) and his English wife back to Australia. Mr. Carter is again taking up pastoral pursuits, but, in lieu of the dry north-west, in the more genial south-west province of Western Australia.