

## Stray Feathers.

A FAVOURITE "ROOKERY."—The photograph (Plate IX.) depicts a large red gum tree growing in a small dam in the Western District of Victoria. At the time of my visit the following birds were nesting in it, viz.:—The Whistling Eagle (*Haliastur sphenurus*), Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Little Black Cormorant (*P. sulcirostris*), Little Cormorant (*P. melanoleucus*), White Ibis (*Ibis molucca*), Yellow-billed Spoonbill (*Platibis flavipes*), and White-necked Heron (*Notophox pacifica*). The birds seemed quite contented in company, but when they left their nests a pair of Ravens (*Corone australis*) would quickly come and commence eating the eggs, but they had a decided preference for Herons' and Spoonbills' eggs, always taking them before those of the Cormorants.—D. LE SOUEF.

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BLACK v. RUFOUS BUTCHER-BIRDS.—Mr. E. M. Cornwall (Cairns), writing under date 8th November, 1904, states:—"I am sending by this mail some photographs (Plates VII.-VIII.) which may prove of interest, and which I think will go a long way towards settling the Black *versus* Brown Butcher-Bird controversy. I have the young birds at home; they are doing well, and I hope to rear them, and send them along to the Melbourne Zoological Gardens.

"The nest is most charmingly situated amongst a luxuriant growth of the pretty little button-plant—some people call it an orchid; I don't know whether it is or not. Close to the nest grows a sturdy little plant of an orchid (*Dendrobium undulatum*). On the other branch, just above the right shoulder of the figure, may be seen several plants of another pretty orchid (*Aria fitzalleni*), whilst on the lowest fork, near the bottom of the picture, there is still another orchid, '*Cymbidium*.' There were three young ones (two black and one brown) in the nest, but one of the black fell out just before the photo. was taken. The two parent birds were both black."

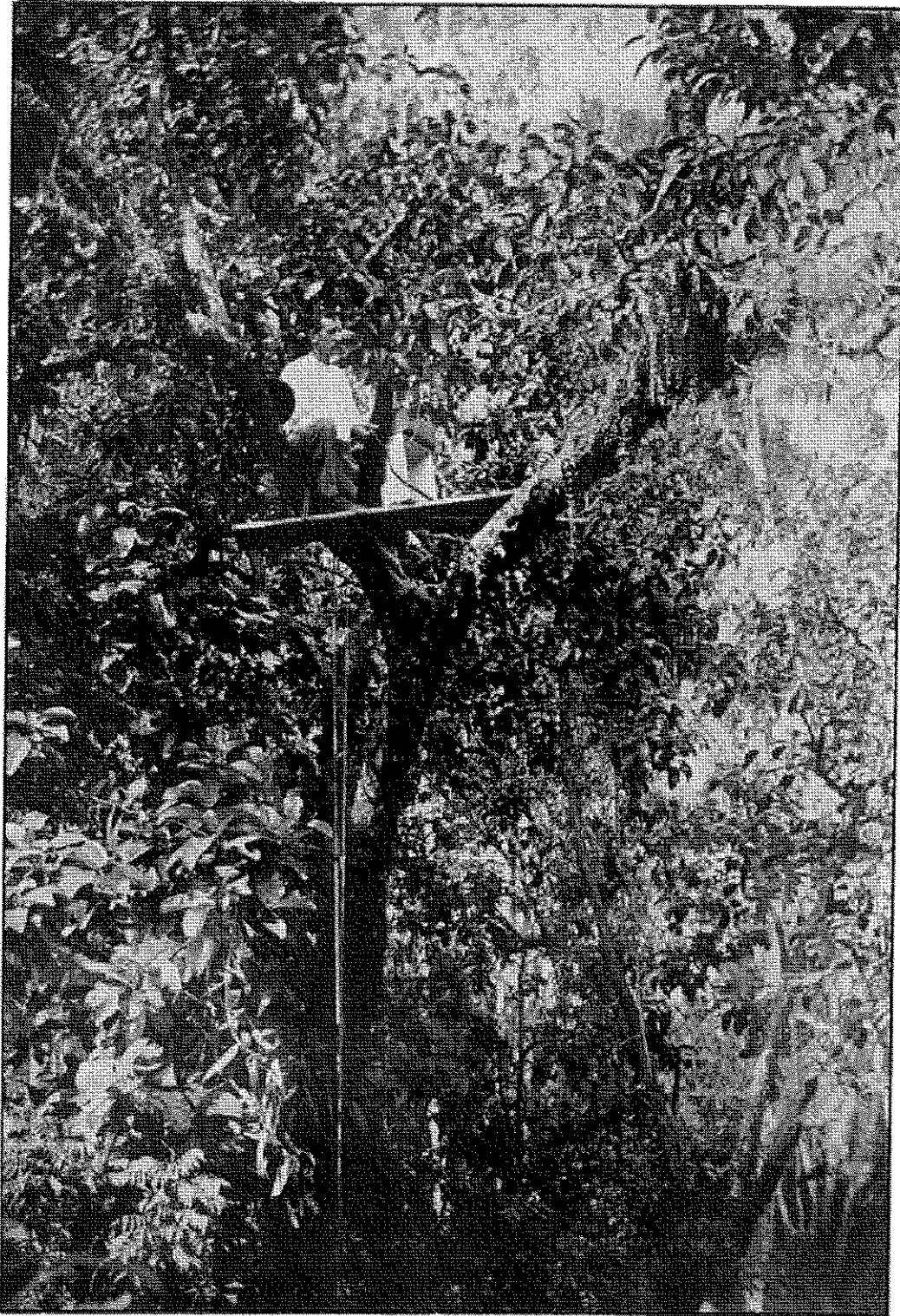
Again, under date 1st December, Mr. Cornwall writes:—"I do not know that I can add anything to what was said last year when I found three nests, each containing three young birds, in two of which one was brown and two black, and in the other two brown and one black. The three which I photographed I still have alive, and they are doing well, and I also have another young brown one which a young friend of mine brought me. When he captured it it had left the nest, and was in company of two black ones. I found three other nests with young ones this year; one had three and the others two each, but all were black. In every case the two parent birds were black.

"To my mind it is conclusively proved that the black and brown birds are identical, and all we have to settle now is whether the young brown is the male or female, and at what age they



Nest of Black Butcher-Bird, with Young—one black and one brown.

FROM A PHOTO. BY E. M. CORNWALL.



Photographing the Nest (*in situ*) of the Black Butcher-Bird (*Cracticus quoyi*).

FROM A PHOTO. BY E. M. CORNWALL.

assume the black plumage. After watching the young birds in captivity, it would not surprise me to find that the brown birds are males, for they seem to be hardier and to feather quicker than the black ones. Then, again, we very often note the young brown one warbling very quietly to itself, but have not noticed the black ones doing it."

[Accompanying the beautiful photographs of the nests of Black Butcher-Birds, Mr. Cornwall sent a picture of the nest of the Helmeted Friar-Bird (*Philemon buceroides*). The nest was built in a tree near the main street of Cairns, and was constructed of a great quantity of twine of many kinds, besides braid, tape, wool, cotton, silk, wadding, &c., &c.—EDS.]

### From Magazines, &c.

*The Journal of Agriculture* (Victoria) continues to give coloured plates of useful insectivorous birds. Part 10 (November) contains an excellent drawing of the familiar Yellow-rumped Tit (*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*) by Mr. C. C. Brittlebank. The accompanying letterpress is by Mr. C. French, F.L.S., F.E.S.

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OUR member, Mr. James R. M'Clymont, M.A., has contributed some "Notes on a Few Birds, Chiefly Migratory and Nomadic, Observed in the Vicinity of Hobart" to *The Zoologist* (15th August, 1904). The Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*), together with some of its foster parents; the Spine-tailed Swift (*Chaetura caudacuta*), and the Swift-Lorikeet (*Nanodes discolor*) are those chiefly mentioned, with interesting and original field notes. With regard to the Swifts, Mr. M'Clymont suggests that the use of the spines on the tail-tips is to enable the bird to cling to "some perpendicular surface of great hardness, such as of a precipitous cliff."

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*Genera Avium*.—A specimen sheet of the letterpress of this work, embracing eight pages, has been received. To say that the forthcoming book is to be illustrated by drawings by M. Keulemans is sufficient to give it authoritative standing, but when it is borne in mind that Mr. P. Wytsman is editor, and that amongst the contributors are numbered such men of standing in avicultural science as Mr. Ernst Hartert, of the Zoological Museum, Tring, no further recommendation is necessary. Passeres: Fam. Eurylæmidæ form the subject of the specimen sheet. The descriptions are clearly and concisely given (in English), and all information is brought up to date. The issue of the book is limited to 300 copies, and the price will be based on a charge of 2d. per page of letterpress, 1s. 3d. for each plain plate, and 2s. 6d. for each coloured one.