Nicholls brought a specimen in the flesh into the Tasmanian Museum. He found it dead near the back door of the homestead of his property at Richmond, some 16 miles north-east of Hobart. For years past it, or its like, had frequented his outhouses. It appears to me to be a dark race of the mainland *Strix delicatula*, the vermiculations of the dorsal surface being scarcely visible. The tail is pure white, with only a faint tinge of pale orange on one portion of the upper surface. Although one specimen is alone available for record, the white of the under surface of it is so very clear, and the deep brownish-grey of the upper surface so devoid of tawny or pale orange, that it appeals to me as being an insular form of the mainland species. The characteristic feature of this specimen is that it is deep brownish-grey, with scarcely any orange upon it, causing it to appear sooty on the whole of the upper surface rather than tawny or orange. The colour of the legs is creamy and not yellow.

Calopsittacus novæ-hollandiæ, Gm., is the second species. It was forwarded to the Tasmanian Museum by Mr. Charles Eaton, and collected on the Russell River, North Huon, 9th March, 1910. Thinking it possible the bird had escaped from captivity, I wrote to Mr. Eaton for particulars. In reply I learn that the residents have not seen this species, it being quite unfamiliar to them. It was shot while upon a dry eucalypt, and is in autumn plumage. The Cockatoo-Parrot is migratory in both eastern and western Australia. It is possible it overflew its normal southern range, and may have been one of a scattered flock. I scarcely think that Tasmania was at any time the southern portion of its home.

It is on record* that a flock of Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus novæ-hollandiæ*) has been seen in a district after an absence of 25 years; while a flock of Galah Cockatoos (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) has been seen after 30 years' absence. Even so, this record, I consider, is simply that of an errant bird rather than of one that has escaped from its cage.—ROBERT HALL. Hobart, 6/6/10.

A Defence of Oology.

THE following is an abridged account of an article by Milton S. Ray, California, which appeared in *The Condor*, January, 1910:—

"The first point I wish to take up is: Is oology scientific or popular ornithology?

"In the opinion of some, perhaps many, the structure and

* *Emu*, October, 1903.

classification of birds is considered the more scientific; in fact a division has been made, terming this 'scientific ornithology' and relegating the study of eggs, young, nests and all else to another division termed 'popular ornithology.' It would seem to me that inasmuch as the eggs are produced by the bird's anatomy and hold new life, they are in a sense a part of the bird's anatomy, and that, if any such separate classification is to be made that birds and eggs should come together rather than eggs and nests. As further proof, I feel quite sure if some bird, a Thrush for instance, of one section produced *invariably* plain bluish-white eggs and that of another section produced *invariably* entirely different eggs, say green heavily blotched with brown, I doubt not that the two birds would soon be separated even if *no* apparent difference could be found in the birds themselves. However, it is not my opinion that any such separation of the study of eggs, birds, or nests is necessary, as the gathering of all *facts* in the study of them, in my idea, is scientific and is ornithology. Nature has drawn no clear cut lines that I can see, and I consider it as *important* to note that the Cliff Swallow constructs its nest of mud as that a hundred specimens of the bird show some slight variation in wing measurement.

"A prominent ornithologist some time ago informed me that he did not consider the geographical variation of species as important as most have deemed it, and that all Song Sparrows in his collection were simply labelled such, accompanied with the usual data. Personally I do not endorse this method, believing all differences discernible should be recognized. I also believe variation in eggs, or any other scientific fact concerning them, important as well, for to me all appear to be but links in a great chain. It seems to be the desire of some, however, to disconnect these 'links,' claiming that the so-called scientific ornithology is the more important, as it is a component part of the science of life. To me it would seem that equally as much of the science of *life* can be learned by a close study of the birds' habits, their eggs and nests, as by the study of their structure and their classification.

"The second point is: Have eggs been scientifically studied or described?

"I maintain that truly scientific descriptions of eggs, treating of their texture, size, shape, and colouration is a part of ornithology that has been neglected and offers material for a monumental work. Take the eggs of the Brewer Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) for instance. I wish to ask any collector familiar with a series, if there are not many specimens that one unfamiliar with the species would have difficulty in identifying if he depended solely on the written descriptions of a writer like Davie for instance, who states that the eggs are marked 'with dark brown . . . . and some with a lighter

shade.' Could anything be more indefinite? Why, this season, which I spent at Lake Tahoe, I examined perhaps as many as a hundred nests of this bird, mostly with eggs, and I can say instead of Davie's two shades of brown, there are nearer twenty! In fact with the exception of the California Murre (*Uria troile californica*) I know of no Californian eggs subject to wider variation in colour. The markings run through various shades of brown, from light grayish, yellowish, and reddish, to a blackish-brown that is almost if not quite black. On some the light purplish-gray markings, which are usually sparse and obscure, predominate and form another type. I noted several sets unmarked except for scrawls and blotches of blackish-brown and purplish-gray around the larger end, being not greatly unlike some specimens of the Redwing Blackbird I have seen. Others again were uniform chocolate-brown with sometimes a blackish scrawl or so on them. The ground colour, almost white in some, was usually greenish-white, though sometimes a pure light green. In shape they varied from almost globular to elongate-ovate.

"My third point is: Why is the study of eggs given such a prominent place in bird magazines, and yet so neglected in our scientific institutions? (Of the latter I can only speak of those on the coast.) I remember that the Californian Academy of Sciences, before the fire, had, in connection with the magnificent collection of mounted birds and bird-skins, but one lonely little case of eggs containing not more perhaps than would be taken by the average collector in a season; and at the present time, in a prominent museum across the bay, I have been informed that eggs are deemed of little importance: in other words, are considered a mere 'side-show' to the collection of birds. To me, the fact that two classes of people, the small boy and the commercial collector, have brought odium on egg-collecting, can in no way detract from its importance; and neither does the fact that eggs are more or less dependent on the birds, inasmuch as often the identity of the parents must be determined before that of the eggs can be established. I believe it time to sound a note of warning, for some time in the future eggs will be given their proper place in bird study, and the coast museums should have adequate space reserved for their accommodation. In fact, I think a Californian museum, equipped with proper cabinets, would soon accumulate quite an extensive collection through the donations of club members and others, and some day, should the interest that has been taken in geographical variation extend to eggs, we will not have to send east of the Rockies to borrow specimens; for it is a well-known fact that the finest collections of Californian eggs are not where they should be, here in California."