

and more varied than the latter. At times I distinctly heard some squeaky notes like those of *G. cantator*, uttered in the same way as a prelude to the song. Another bird which interested me a good deal was the Tomtit (*Myiomoira toitoi*) which came up several times when I chirped. It is like a dark specimen of a female *Petroica*, with no red colour, but it has the little whitish mark on the wing so characteristic of our Robins, and it droops its wings at intervals in the same fashion. We also saw Whiteheads—a bird *sui generis*—of course nothing like *Orthonyx*, with which it was once placed. Silvereyes were very common. Fantails (*Rhipidura flabellifera*) with tail feathers almost all white, were frequent. I glimpsed a Tui as it flew past, after we had heard its fine song, and we had excellent views of a N.Z. Pigeon, which sat on a low tree till we were within a few feet of it.

From Magazines, Etc.

Australia in Scotland.—The Royal Scottish Museum has been the recipient of a splendid collection of about 350 Australian birds from Lady McEacharn, of Galloway House, Garlieston, and Captain N. McEacharn (says the *Edinburgh Scotsman*). The collection, gathered by the late Sir Malcolm McEacharn during his residence in Australia, is representative of the bird life of the Dominion, and, so far as the eggs are concerned, is probably unequalled in this country. Australia is without the singing birds which are a feature of our own country, but what the feathered population lacks in music it atones for by beauty of form and brilliance of colour. The rich representation of Birds of Paradise, Bower-birds, Parrots and Parrakeets is the special feature of the collection, but in addition to the birds and their eggs the student of natural history will find interest in a variety of zoological specimens, including examples of marsupials in embryonic and later stages, as well as fishes and marine organisms collected in the East Indian Archipelago.

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The Whip-bird's Music.—"The other day a Whip-bird whistled for about an hour in the scrub bordering my garden," writes a correspondent of *Sydney Daily Telegraph*. "It was at daybreak. It displayed a repertory of three calls. One of three short notes on C sharp (third space of the treble clef), the last sustained and crescendo, finishing with an upward whip-crack, like a sharp, swift glissando, starting an octave lower, and going up about two octaves, the tone quality being quite different to the first three notes, and not possible on a musical instrument on account of its unmistakable stock-whip quality. Another call was a transportation of the first (a third down), finishing with a descending crack—the inversion of the upward

glissando. Still another call, not so often used, started on a long-drawn out F sharp (top line of the treble stave), gliding with a crescendo into G, a semitone above, and finishing with a whip-crack. He displayed a few little chortling notes, but these were infrequent. I tried to imitate the first and second calls, but my whip-crack was very unconvincing. After a couple of feeble efforts (I can't whistle first thing in the morning) the bird from the unseen shelter kindly assisted me, whistling the same call after me, and repeating the whip-crack part, as much as to say 'This is where you go wrong.' Then I only whistled the first three notes, and he came in on time with the whip-crack. I tried the second calls, with some results, and then tried alternately the higher and the lower notes of the first two calls, the bird finishing with the corresponding whip-crack in each case. He then appeared to suggest that I should try the third call, but my morning whistle not being up to this high pitch, he went back to the other calls. This conversation of ours lasted for twenty minutes."

To the foregoing, Mr. G. de Cairos Rego, musical critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, adds :—Here is a chance for an Australian composer to write a bird symphony on these bird calls, so minutely described. Musicians are, of course, familiar with the imitations of bird music by great composers, and some of the most famous had pet birds. Mozart kept a Starling, Beethoven an Indian Raven, Wagner a Parrot. The last-named, asked whether he did not find his bird too noisy, replied, "I am used to it. I take it everywhere. It is noisy, but I am compensated by having a wife who does not play the piano."

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Australian Song Birds.—An article appeared in a recent issue of the London *Spectator* from the pen of Mr. Will H. Ogilvie, the Australian poet, now living in England, descriptive of Australian birds. It is the opinion of a correspondent writing to that journal that Mr. Ogilvie was not sufficiently appreciative of the ability of Australian birds to sing. In a letter dated from Rothesay, Scotland, the correspondent, Mr. J. D. Ramsay, says :—

"I think that Mr. W. H. Ogilvie has been less than just to the birds of Australia. It may be that living a good deal 'outback' in the plains country, he has not come in contact with some of the native birds in their natural haunts—the thick scrubs of the coastal districts and the hills and valleys of the coastal rivers. Having been for years an interested student of Australian bird life, particularly in New South Wales, I venture to affirm that Mr. Ogilvie never heard the Reed-bird sing. To me its song, uttered while in flight, like the Skylark, is quite as clear and sweet, quite as intense and many-noted as that of the celebrated British songster. But the song of the one charms with the associations it evokes, while the other, alas, has as yet no poet to endow its melody with added sweetness. When one has heard the song of the Shrike-thrush in the sunny forests there is little likelihood that it will be forgotten, for its delightful melody seems to give the final touch

of grace to a perfect sylvan scene, and the bird has every right to the title bestowed upon it—*harmonica*. The Cuckoo's call has little of the thrilling quality which that of the Wonga Pigeon possesses, especially when uttered in the early morning, as the sun is just touching the tops of the trees; and so persuading is the sound that frequently even the most experienced woodsmen have great difficulty in deciding if the bird is within 50 ft of them or 200 yards distant. The call of this beautiful and stately bird has laid hold of me as never the call of any other single bird anywhere. Four years ago, when revisiting Australia, I was charmed to hear again the song of the locally named "wild canary," first at the distance of from four to five hundred yards and then closer. This bird outrivals any caged canary I have heard—its notes being louder, richer, more mellow.* Other birds, such as the Butcher-bird, can flute gaily, and I think it a pity that justice is not done to their songs. It is to be hoped that the quickened interest in the affairs of the Dominions which we have noticed lately will widen so as to embrace not only economic, political, and Imperialistic questions, but also the natural history of these vast countries."

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The Oldest Known Birds.—Dr. Petronievics has recently published in the *Annales Geologiques de la Peninsule Balkanique*, Vol. 8, 1925, the results of his studies of the two fossil birds known as *Archaeopteryx*. As is well known the two fossils were found in the lithographic stone strata of Bavaria, believed to be of Jurassic age. One of them is in the British Museum and the other in the Berlin Museum. According to *Nature*, vol. 116, p. 183, Dr. Petronievics "comes to the conclusion that, so far from being the same species, they represent two different sub-classes of birds. For the British Museum specimen he retains the name *Archaeopteryx*, and calls the Berlin one *Archaeormis*. The first is considered to be a primitive ratite and the second a primitive carinate. In general *Archaeopteryx* shows the more primitive characters of the two. The author comes to conclusions, which are certainly not those of the text-book, that the ancestor of birds is to be sought in a primitive group of the *Lacertilia* (lizards) and that the resemblances which have led investigators to see some affinity between birds and the dinosaurs are to be interpreted as due to convergence."

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Sea-Gulls and Grasshoppers.—The Burketown correspondent of the *North Queensland Register* reported on January 18: Grasshoppers have made an appearance since the rain, and birds are gorging on them. Flocks of Sea-gulls first discovered the 'hoppers, and great flights of these birds are scouring the plains. Brolgas, Plain Turkeys, Ibis, Plovers, and other birds are having a good time . . . and have not, so far, protested against the invasion of the land by the hungry sea-birds. But it is obviously a trespass on the land birds' domain, without any chance of them getting back on the visitors when food is abundant in the sea. The Bird on the Land, like the Man on the Land, always gets the worst of the deal.

*Probably the Rufous Whistler (*Pachycephala rufiventris*)—Editor.