

## From Magazines.

**Egg-Collecting.**—Something in the nature of an ornithological sensation has been caused in England over what has become known as "the Crossbill case." Mr. Edgar Chance, well-known because of his published observations on the Cuckoo and the placing of its eggs in other birds' nests, was convicted at a Petty Sessions in Norfolk on a charge of aiding and abetting a farm-bailiff in taking the eggs of a Crossbill, in contravention of the Wild Birds' Protection Act. As a consequence, Mr. Chance was requested by the British Ornithologists' Union to resign his membership of the Union, and it is reported in the *Ibis* that he did so.

Since the publication of the *Ibis* for October, however, Mr. Chance has issued an Open Letter to all members of the B.O.U. In this he states that his resignation had been offered long before the adjudicating committee of the B.O.U., requested him to resign, a fact admitted by the committee under legal pressure. "It may not be generally known," adds Mr. Chance, "that some of the Committee who adjudicated on my case are themselves ardent collectors and have taken quite a number of Crossbills' eggs. But they do not happen to have been summoned for so doing! . . . Dr. Sydney Long admitted to the Committee that he had himself induced the local man to take a nest of Crossbills' eggs, that he had paid what was undoubtedly an excessive cash consideration for the eggs, and that he had then reported the local man to the Police! It was after such preliminaries that Dr. Long appeared in Court and before the B.O.U. Committee as witness and informer against me! I now understand that a special general meeting of the Union is about to be called on the demand of a number of members who are determined that the matter shall not be allowed to rest until the opinion of the Union has been taken."

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**"Crimes of the Kookaburra."**—Some years ago Mr. Donald Macdonald wrote a trenchant article in the Melbourne *Argus* stigmatising the Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*) as "a laughing demon," because of the amount of damage it does among small birds. Recently Professor Osborne, of Melbourne University, returned to the charge; he published in the *Argus* of 13 November, 1926, an attack on the Kookaburra under the headings "A Bird of Evil; Crimes of the Kookaburra." In the course of a flamboyant article Professor Osborne referred to the "Laughing Jack" as "a disgusting bird," "a blood-thirsty bully" and various other choice things—all based on the charge that it has killed many bird-babies. Mr. R. T. Littlejohns, press correspondent of the R.A.O.U., wrote to the *Argus* setting out some of the good points of the Kookaburra, and, following an animated controversy, Dr. J. A. Leach wrote a column article in the same journal of 20 November. This article was headed "The Kookaburra; Australia's Favourite Bird," and in it the much-debated bird was acclaimed as one of the most valuable members of our avi-fauna,

though it was admitted that "Old Jack" may occasionally cause trouble when he varies his menu. Dr. Leach issues a warning regarding the menace to bird-life created by cats, and concludes his article thus: "The latest effort to dethrone the Kookaburra from his proud position as Australia's favourite bird will undoubtedly prove a boomerang shot. It will develop in Australians the determination to protect to the full the Kookaburra, one of the most famous members of the avi-fauna of Australia."

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**Children and Birds.**—The following report is abridged from an article in the *Hobart Mercury* (3/11/26):—"A branch of the Gould League of Bird Lovers has recently been formed in Tasmania, and already the membership is representative of many of the State Schools. The State Education Department has sanctioned its formation, and, moreover is supporting the efforts of Mr. G. W. Knight, the head teacher of the Lindesfarne State School, in establishing the organisation throughout the State. It is unfortunate that funds will not permit the issue to the members of a typical Tasmanian certificate, but, for the present, use is being made of the Victorian certificate, which is illuminated with pictures of familiar birds and a photograph of the great John Gould, Australia's pioneer bird-man. . . . Out of the work of this league may come measures that will ensure the protection of native birds and the education of the community in the value of the birds. Teachers are all interested in the work and assist in nature competitions among the scholars, which are set by officers of the league. A teacher in a country school has great scope if he or she desires to co-operate in this fine work, and has many opportunities for inaugurating a nature-study circle. Bird sanctuaries about the school and the provision of nesting and feeding places go far towards awakening in the child perhaps a lifelong appreciation of all wild life. Tasmania has many beautiful and interesting birds, all of them worthy of study and adequate protection. Towards the accomplishment of better means for their protection, and a changed outlook on nature generally the Gould League in Tasmania bids fair to play a conspicuous part."

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**Vanishing Pigeons.**—Mr. J. O'Neill Brenan, R.A.O.U., writes in the *Brisbane Daily Mail*:—"Talking of our wild Pigeons the other day, my old friend and one-time official chief, Mr. W. E. Parry-Okeden, mentioned the Flock Pigeon (*Histriophaps histrionica*). He told me that when in charge of the Border Customs patrol, which branch of the department he formed, he arrived one afternoon at some small waterholes. Suddenly the sky darkened, and the next moment thousands of Pigeons came in. They crowded on top of each other, hiding the water from view, and permitted Mr. Okeden and his party to walk in among them. Of course, it is many years since Mr. Parry-Okeden saw what he described, but it is remarkable that, with so many people travelling over the country that should still hold the Flock Pigeon, I never hear of any being seen. The theory is that the stocking of their country with sheep has caused the Flock Pigeons to disappear, but there must be plenty of room yet for them in other parts."

"The 'Squatter' is also known as the Partridge Pigeon. It used to be fairly common on the Upper Brisbane and the Lockyer, and was plentiful in the neighbourhood of Yeulba, and there were a good many on Baffle Creek. I am told it has disappeared from those parts, but I heard of some on the Dawson. Like the Flock Pigeon, it breeds on the ground and lays two eggs of the same creamy tone. I have seen the young ones, fully fledged, lie to a dog just like a Stubble Quail, allowing themselves to be caught; although described as strictly terrestrial, when flushed it perches or squats on the horizontal branch of a tree. It is the best Pigeon for the table of any that I know, being well flavoured and always tender."

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### Notes and Comments.

Members of the R.A.O.U. generally will join with Sydney members in extending warm sympathy to the Hon. State Secretary for N.S.W., Mr. N. W. Cayley, whose wife died on 16 January, 1927. Mr. Cayley has for many years been one of the most energetic workers possessed by the R.A.O.U., as well as being a leading ornithological artist, and his wife always rendered him a full measure of co-operation in his work. Two children, aged 5 and 2 years, respectively, remain.

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Mr. W. B. Alexander, M.A., C.F.A.O.U., a vice-president of the R.A.O.U., who returned to England nearly a year ago, went to Canada to attend the Annual Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union at Ottawa during October. He had a most interesting time there (including a week-end visit to an island in Blue Sea Lake, in the province of Quebec, where he heard the famous demoniacal "laughter" of Loons), and then went to New York in time for the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Audubon Societies.

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Dr. A. Wetmore, assistant secretary of the United States National Museum, merits the congratulations of all members of the R.A.O.U. (of which he is a member) on his election as President of the American Ornithologists' Union. Previous to that election Dr. Wetmore wrote to the R.A.O.U. expressing appreciation of the new Checklist, a copy of which he had just received. "The List," he added, "should prove highly valuable to members of the Union and to others interested in Australian birds. Checklists in themselves are dry reading, but I must confess to having read the Appendix by Mr. Wolstenholme, on the derivation of the scientific names of Australian birds, with great attention. His effort will be highly useful to those who are working actively in other faunas."