

Forgotten Feathers.

[From "Expedition into Central Australia" (Sturt, 1869),
vol. i., p. 269.]

"THE morning we started to pay a visit to the blacks was more than usually oppressive even at daybreak, and about 9 it blew a hot wind from the north-east. As we rode across the stony plain lying between us and the hills the heated and parching blasts that came upon us were more than we could bear. We were in the centre of the plain when Mr. Browne drew my attention to a number of small black specks in the upper air. These spots, increasing momentarily in size, were evidently approaching us very rapidly. In an incredibly short time we were surrounded by several hundreds of the Common Kite, stooping down to within a few feet of us, and then turning away, after having eyed us steadily. Several approached us so closely that they threw themselves back to avoid contact, opening their beaks and spreading out their talons. The long flight of these birds, reaching from the ground into the heavens, put me strongly in mind of one of Martin's beautiful designs, in which he produces the effect of distance by a multitude of objects gradually vanishing from the view. Whatever the reader may think, these birds had a most formidable aspect, and were too numerous for us to have overpowered if they had really attacked us. That they came down to see what unusual object was wandering across the lonely deserts over which they soar, in the hope of prey, there can be no doubt; but seeing that we were likely to prove formidable antagonists they wheeled from us in extensive sweeps, and were soon lost to view in the lofty region from whence they had descended."

The "Common Kite" referred to is *Milvus affinis*, Gld.

It would be interesting to learn if Professor Spencer or Mr. Gillen, or other recent explorer, has observed the peculiar trait of this Kite mentioned by Sturt.—H. E. H.

About Members.

A SPECIALLY bound copy of the first volume of *The Emu* was forwarded to their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, as co-Patrons of the Aust. O.U. The volume was accompanied by a "snap-shot" reminiscence (taken by a member of the Union) of Her Royal Highness at Fernshawe, Victoria.

Mr. D. Le Souëf has received the following acknowledgment from the Private Secretary of their Royal Highnesses :—" The Prince of Wales has received from His Excellency the Governor-General of Australia a copy of *The Emu*, which you have been good enough to forward for the acceptance of their Royal

Highnesses from the Council of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union. I am also directed to express to you the thanks of the Princess of Wales for the photograph taken on the occasion of Her Royal Highness's visit to Fernshaw."

On the afternoon of 15th July His Excellency Lord Tennyson and *suite* visited "Holmfirth," South Australia, the estate of Mr. J. F. Mellor, for the purpose of inspecting the birds, other pets, &c., of the family. Lord Tennyson expressed his keen appreciation of the way the native birds were cared for and protected. Mrs. Mellor's unique collection and Mr. J. W. Mellor's well-filled oological cabinets also came under His Excellency's observation, and the way he compared the eggs of certain Australian birds with those of the old country showed that His Excellency was quite conversant with European ornithology.

Sir Samuel Way was sworn in as Acting-Governor of South Australia on the 17th July.

A Tasmanian member (who wishes his name withheld) has subscribed £1 to the Coloured Figure Fund.

Mr. H. E. Hill, of the Field Naturalists' Club, Geelong, and Hon. Curator of the Museum in connection with the Gordon Technical College, has been appointed Assistant at the Guildford Grammar School, Western Australia. Mr. Hill has compiled some field observations, extending over many years, of the birds of the Geelong district, which will appear in *The Emu* in due course.

That Americans are wise in their generation has an additional proof in the fact that they afford facilities in some States to the young to study natural history, and have chosen an admirable means of imparting instruction. A letter was recently received by Mr. A. J. Campbell from Mr. F. M. Chapman, Associate Curator of the American Museum of Natural History, forwarding a request from Professor A. S. Bickmore, of the State Department of Public Instruction, for copies of a number of the original negatives used in his (Mr. Campbell's) work—"Nests and Eggs." These are required for the purpose of making "lantern slide illustrations to be used in connection with nature study in the State of New York."

Members will regret to learn of the death of Mr. Charles G. A. Winnecke, F.R.G.S., the well-known surveyor and explorer, who had charge of the Horn scientific expedition to Central Australia in 1894. He died in Adelaide on the 10th September last, at the young and useful age of 44. Mr. Winnecke took part and a keen interest in the first Congress of the Union, held in Adelaide last year.