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# Feathers

and

# Facts . . .

Statement by the  
(Royal Society)  
for the  
Protection of Birds.



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# FEATHERS AND FACTS

A REPLY TO THE FEATHER-TRADE, AND REVIEW  
OF FACTS WITH REFERENCE TO THE  
PERSECUTION OF BIRDS FOR THEIR PLUMAGE

*not advised?*

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# Feathers and Facts.

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## PART I.

### THE STORY OF THE PLUME-TRADE.

THE facts concerning the trade in birds and their feathers for millinery purposes have been repeatedly stated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and by kindred Societies in Europe, America (North and South), India and other parts of the world. Now that there is a fair prospect of a law being obtained to prohibit the importation into Great Britain of the plumage of species which are being destroyed solely for their feathers, the "Trade," alarmed at the threatened loss of their profits, are industriously engaged in scattering their letters, circulars, and pamphlets broadcast over the country.

It therefore becomes necessary to recapitulate the facts, in reply to the statement of defence in their latest publication—"The Feather Trade" \*; to deal yet once more with their old mis-statements, and with such of their new assertions as have any bearing on the subject. Much that is irrelevant is introduced by writers representing the trade; much about the spread of civilization as a cause of the extirpation of birds, and much in denunciation of pheasant preservation and of big-game hunting in Africa.

The question to be dealt with is the destruction of wild-bird life by plume-hunters. This is infinitely the greatest cause, probably of any, certainly of any of the preventable causes of the destruction of wild-bird life throughout the world.

\* "The Feather Trade: The Case for the Defence." By C. F. Downham. (Sciama & Co.).

The plume-trade, though now extensive and lucrative, is not an old one, and it remains in but a few hands, so that in dealing with it there are not the difficulties which might be involved in touching an old-established industry, or an industry affecting a large number of shareholders or of workpeople. (*See page 30.*) As the business has attained to any magnitude only since about 1870,\* it is easy to trace its growth and its methods.

### Present Policy of the Trade.

The present policy of the traders is to try to shut the door on all past experience, to decry all evidence as "many years old," to stigmatize it as dealing with "conditions which have no existence to-day," and to ask the public to accept a brand-new version for which they themselves are the sole evidence. This is hardly the way in which to consider a serious subject; but as past history scarcely inspires confidence in statements of to-day or in the outlook for to-morrow, no surprise can be felt that it is the way recommended by the party which is nervously anxious to be trusted.

## I.

### THE TRADE IN BIRDS' FEATHERS.

In 1876 Professor Newton wrote to the "Times" (January 28th):

"Like others of my brother naturalists, I have been long aware by report of the enormous sales of birds' feathers which are being constantly held in London; but the particulars of them do not, except by accident, come before us. Chance has thrown in my way a catalogue, or portion of a catalogue, of one of these auctions, and its contents are such as to horrify me, for I had no conception of the amount of destruction to which exotic birds are condemned by fashion—an amount which cannot fail speedily to extirpate some of the fairest members of creation, for I must premise, for the benefit of your non-ornithological readers, that it is

\* "The fancy feather-trade did not exist in the years 1860-70."—"The Feather Trade," p. 9.

chiefly, if not solely, at the breeding-season that the most beautiful, and therefore the most valuable, feathers are developed in birds.”

Most of the feathers enumerated in this catalogue were Heron and Egret plumes from India, and Humming-birds and other exotic species from South America and its islands.

Professor Newton himself was mainly responsible for the Sea Birds Preservation Act of 1868, which put a check on the killing of Kittiwakes on British coasts for the sake of their wings (though even this destruction is not wholly suppressed). Since that time the foreign trade has attained huge proportions; and few parts of the world where birds of any commercial value exist have escaped the attentions of the plume-hunter. The principal areas of destruction have been India, South America, especially Brazil and Venezuela; North America, especially Florida; China, Burmah, and New Guinea. But from the slopes of the Himalayas, where the Impeyan Pheasant (\*) has been decimated, to the small islands of the Pacific, where colonies of graceful Terns and lordly Albatross (†) have been shot out, and from the Australian bush, in which the Lyre-bird (‡) tries in vain to shelter, to the steppes of Russia, where the Willow Grouse (‡) has been shot by the thousand, that its wings might be sold at three farthings a pair, the emissaries of the trade have been at work. London and New York sale-rooms have seen the result.

### The Movement in America.

In 1885 Mr. Sennett, of the American Ornithologists' Union, called the attention of American ornithologists to the rapid disappearance of native birds owing to their use for millinery, and, as a result, the American Ornithologists' Union Bird-Protection Committee was organized in 1886. In 1886 also the first Audubon Society was formed in Massachusetts, having as its object :

“To discourage buying and wearing for ornamental purposes the feathers of any wild bird, and to further otherwise the protection of our native birds. We would awaken

\* Page 25. † Page 23. ‡ Page 29.

the community to the fact that this fashion of wearing feathers means the cruel slaughter of myriads of birds, and that some of our finest birds are already decimated."

There are now over thirty of these State societies in North America.

### Bird Destruction in Florida.

In 1887 a series of articles appeared in the "Auk," the organ of the American Ornithologists' Union, by Mr. W. E. D. Scott, a well-known ornithologist and traveller, describing the vast destruction of Egrets, Spoonbill, Tantalus, Flamingo, Ibises, Terns, and other birds by plume-hunters in Florida. He records the shooting out of Heron and Pelican colonies, and the ravaging of the whole coast of West Florida in the breeding-season, by plume-hunters, who collected not only the nuptial plumes of the Herons, but also breeding Plover, Owls, Terns, Sandpipers, and any other small species that came in their way.

Further indisputable evidence of the slaughter of the Florida Egrets and other birds has been furnished by Mr. F. M. Chapman, of the American Museum of Natural History, Mr. H. K. Job, State Ornithologist for Connecticut, and other writers. They describe the Heron and Egret colonies now struggling back into existence by means of the strongest bird-protection laws that can be made—laws backed up by the presence of armed wardens to guard the breeding-places. They describe also occasional raids of hunters on some newly-discovered rookery, which is then swiftly "shot out" before the would-be guardians can reach it.

"The whole business of the slaughter of the white Herons for their plumes for millinery purposes," writes Mr. Job ("Wild Wings," p. 144), "is one that every lover of nature and every person of humane feeling who understands the case will regard as no less than infamous. The origin of the trade is ignorance on one side and greed for money on the other, and there is not one true word which can be said in its defence."

Fuller particulars of this devastation of Florida will be given later (*see* page 54), because the case of the Egret is one especially

dear to the dealer, and one round which he has woven his most ingenious inventions. Mr. Downham's main reply to the sickening accounts (the adjective is Professor Newton's) given by naturalists, is that Florida is a sort of suburb, which is now being "developed"; that the Egrets have retreated just as foxes have migrated from Hampstead Heath and partridges from Peckham; that there never were many; that there still are many; that the feather-trade is not responsible for the decrease; that the birds were not shot at breeding-time (*see* pp. 22, 54, 56, 58, etc.).

The stories of the "artificial" osprey and the "moulted" plumes will also be considered later on (pp. 39, 41).

### Extermination.

In 1893 Professor Newton's "Dictionary of Birds" was published. Under the heading "Extermination," he again commented on the plume-market. The way that this article is treated in "The Feather Trade" is an example of the methods employed for the defence. Professor Newton showed that civilization and agriculture naturally result in the clearance of land and consequent reduction in the number of wild creatures that had their homes and obtained their food in marsh or forest. This part of the argument is approved by the trade, who, as already said, picture American States and South American countries as similar regions to Hampstead or Tooting. Man has come; birds must "migrate." But Professor Newton adds:

"One other cause which threatens the existence of many species of birds, if it has not already produced the extermination of some, is the rage for wearing their feathers that now and again seizes civilized women, who take their ideas of dress from interested milliners of both sexes—persons who, having bought a large stock of what are known as 'plumes,' proceed to make a profit by declaring them to be in fashion. The tender-hearted ladies who buy them little suspect that some of the large supplies required by the 'plume-trade' are chiefly got by laying waste the homes of birds that breed gregariously, and that at their very breeding-time. . . . All efforts to awaken the conscience of those who tacitly encourage this detestable devastation, and thereby share in

its guilt, have hitherto failed ; and, unless laws to stop it be not only passed but enforced, it will go on till it ceases for want of victims.”

This strong statement is referred to by Mr. Downham as\* “ a theory which remains a theory for want of that element of substantiation which has so completely proved the theory already dealt with ” (the plume-hunter not being concerned with Hampstead and Tooting) and, adds the writer, “ the sentimentalist suppressing the proved theory, has seized upon this.” What the sentimentalist may have done, it is unnecessary to consider ; but persons of common sense will assuredly not tilt at circumstances which are wholly or partly irremediable ; they will simply strive the harder to save that remnant of wild life which is being persecuted to death for a useless and preventable purpose.

### **The Society for the Protection of Birds.**

In 1889 the Society for the Protection of Birds was established in succession to one or two previously formed leagues, which sought to band women together to resist plume-wearing on account of the cruelty and destruction involved. The Society, as its programme avowed from the first, “ was called into existence by the ruthless destruction of birds, especially those with ornamental plumage, which has been carried on for years all over the world in order to satisfy the demands of a barbarous fashion in millinery.” From that time to the present it has continued to publish the facts as to the “ fancy-feather ” business, and the effect of that business on the bird-life of the world. These facts, especially those relating to the Egret and Heron, have been stated and commented on in almost every newspaper of any standing. Similar societies have been formed in other European countries.

### **“ The Times.”**

In 1893 Mr. W. H. Hudson, the author of “ The Naturalist in La Plata ” and “ Argentine Ornithology ”—who had already described in a pamphlet written for the S.P.B.†, the nesting

\* “ The Feather Trade,” p. 23.

† “ Osprey ; or, Egrets and Aigrettes.” S.P.B. Leaflet No. 3.

habits of the Heron tribe, and the methods of the hunter in shooting out the heronries at the nesting season—wrote a further protest to the “Times” (Oct. 17th), from the point of view of the scientific ornithologist. The “Times,” in its leading columns, spoke perhaps more strongly than any “sentimentalist” has ever done :

“How long will women tolerate a fashion which involves such wholesale, wanton, and hideous cruelty as this ? . . . . If in every pulpit in the land this shocking story of the Egrets were told, surely for once humanity would prove stronger than fashion. . . . Let it be clearly understood, once for all, that the feathered woman is a cruel woman, that for the sake of a passing fashion, which pleases no rational being and should disgust all who can think and feel and understand, she brings dishonour upon her sex, and robs nature of its beauty without adding to her own.”

Four years later Mr. Hudson wrote in the same journal against the wearing, not only of “ospreys” but of all the brilliant birds whose skins and feathers were “on view in the dusty desert of the show-rooms in Houndsditch”; and the “Times” again devoted a leading article to the subject.

### Lord Lilford.

Lord Lilford, President of the British Ornithologists’ Union from 1867 to 1896, took occasion to refer to the matter in Vol. VII. of his “Birds of the British Islands,” in the chapter on the Great White Heron :

“Here it would seem appropriate to notice the wanton destruction of this and many kindred species that has been carried on all the world over for many years past, for no other purpose than the supply of the dorsal plumes for the supposed ornamentation of feminine and military headgear. In ‘the trade’ these feathers are known as ‘osprey’; and the thoughtless fashion for them has caused the almost entire extinction of more than one species. I am delighted to believe that in this country at least a very considerable check

has been put upon this atrocious business by the action of the ladies' 'Society for the Protection of Birds,' an association that cannot be too widely made known, or too highly commended. I would strongly urge all ladies who may honour me by reading these notes, to enrol themselves as members of this really beneficent society, whose only object is the preservation from wanton destruction of some of the most interesting and beautiful of organized creatures."

In his chapter on the Little Egret, Lord Lilford wrote of it as the most confiding and fearless of man of any of the Ardeidæ, but added :

"It is probable, however, that by this time the poor birds, or those that may be left of them, have learned that feminine fashion has cast its eye upon them for personal decoration, and that the hint of gain by this cruel folly has rendered the animal Man, as a rule, a very dangerous neighbour."

In 1899 Professor Newton returned to the charge, with figures taken "from a source no more sensational or sentimental than the 'Public Ledger,'" to illustrate the quantities of "osprey" feathers and Birds-of-Paradise sold at the London feather sales.

### "Shot Down at their Breeding-Places."

"It is," he added, "a fact known to everyone who will take the trouble to enquire, that all these Egrets are shot down at their breeding-places while they are building their nests or rearing their young, and that if so be that the latter are hatched, they die of hunger on their parents' death, the breeding-places being absolutely devastated by the plume-hunters. The personal experience on this point of Mr. W. E. D. Scott, a competent and unimpassioned witness, has never been, and cannot be, refuted as regards the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of North America, where these settlements of the birds are all but extinguished; but the same thing goes on all over the world wherever Egrets are found in numbers sufficient to make their destruction a profitable enterprise."

## The Army Order.

In 1898, through the action of Lord Wolseley, Commander-in-Chief, the authorities at the War Office resolved to discontinue the use of "osprey" plumes in the British Army. In a letter to the Hon. Secretary of the S.P.B. from Dublin on August 2nd, 1895, Lieut.-Colonel Childers wrote :

" Lord Wolseley desires me to inform you that he has ascertained, on enquiry, that the plumes worn by officers of Horse Artillery, Hussars, King's Royal Rifles, and Rifle Brigade are obtained from the birds of various species of white Egrets and Herons *during the nesting season*, at which time these birds are in full plumage. An enormous number are also worn by ladies, who are responsible for nine-tenths of the amount annually slain."

In 1899 the Order was given that the officers of the regiments who had hitherto worn "ospreys" should henceforth wear plumes made from ostrich feathers. Previously to this, turbans had been substituted for plumed caps in the dress of the Viceroy of India's Bodyguard, for the same reason.

## Exportation from India.

In 1902 the Government of India issued a Circular to all the local Governments and Administrations with reference to the protection of wild birds in India, in which the following questions were asked :

" To what extent the skins of birds of handsome or useful plumage are exported, and whether this trade has increased or decreased of late years ; also whether there is reason to believe that the destruction of wild birds, especially of non-migratory insectivorous birds, during what should be close seasons for them, is extensive throughout the country ; and, if so, whether it is leading to the extermination of any species of wild birds."

As a result of this enquiry the Government of India issued an Ordinance (Customs Circular No. 13, of 1902) prohibiting entirely

the exportation from British India of skins and feathers of all birds, except feathers of ostriches and skins and feathers exported bona-fide as specimens of natural history.

This Ordinance is further referred to in Chapter IV. (p. 61.) together with the words and actions of the plume-trade with respect to it. Some members of the trade approached the Government of India in 1904 with a petition for the rescinding of the regulation; but the reply was given that the Government saw no reason for its withdrawal or modification.

### **The Queen's Letter.**

In 1906, at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Protection of Birds (which had been incorporated under Royal Charter in 1904), a letter was read from Queen Alexandra, stating that Her Majesty "never wears Egret plumes herself, and will certainly do all in her power to discourage the cruelty practised on these beautiful birds"; and further, giving the President of the Society (the Duchess of Portland) full permission to use her name "in any way you think best to conduce to the protection of birds."

### **The Importation of Plumage Bill.**

In 1908 Lord Avebury introduced into the House of Lords a Bill to Prohibit the Importation of Plumage. This Bill was the result of a meeting summoned by Lord Avebury, on the initiative of Mr. James Buckland, at which there were present, in addition to Lord Avebury and Mr. Buckland, representatives of the Royal Society, the Linnean Society, the Zoological Society of London, the Selborne Society, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the British Museum Natural History Department (Dr. Bowdler Sharpe). The Bill was framed, by request, by Mr. Montagu Sharpe, Chairman of Council R.S.P.B., and was, on its second reading, referred to a Select Committee of the House, who heard evidence from the promoters of the measure, from official representatives of India, Australia, the United States, the Board of Trade, and the Customs, and also from the principal feather-importers, traders, and brokers.

The Committee came to the conclusion that numerous species of birds are being recklessly slaughtered, and that while many are being greatly reduced in numbers, others are in danger of being actually exterminated ; that the Bill would be not only of general advantage, but would also render more effective the legislation of India, of Australia and of the United States ; that the provisions of the Bill are such as can be carried out in practice and without difficulty by the Public Departments concerned ; and that the Bill should be made the basis of representations to other Governments in order to induce them to pass similar laws.

This Bill proposes to prohibit the possession for the purpose of sale or exchange of the plumage or skin of any wild bird imported into the United Kingdom. Exemptions are made in respect of ostrich feathers and eider-down, of specimens for museums, etc., of feathers for making fishing-flies, and of wild birds imported as food. It passed the House of Lords on July 21st, 1908, and was introduced into the House of Commons on July 22nd, by Lord Robert Cecil, but did not reach the second reading before the end of the Session.\*

Bills with the same object have since been introduced into the House of Commons by Sir William Anson, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and Mr. Percy Alden, and have been blocked.

This, in briefest form, is the history of the Plumage question, a history the public is now requested to overlook on the hypothesis that everything was really quite different from what it was represented to be ; that everything is entirely different now from what it used to be ; and that birds are not decreasing, but increasing, on account of the proceedings of plume-hunters.

\* For text of Bill *see* Appendix, p. 72.

## II.

## THE TRADE DEFENCE.

The trade have been slow in taking serious steps to defend themselves, and the history of the defence is somewhat curious. Feathers having been proclaimed the fashion, it is evident that the feather-importers relied on the belief that the voice of fashion was stronger than the voice of either science or humanity. Some little time, however, after the formation of the Society for the Protection of Birds and of the Selborne Society, when women all over the country were being made acquainted with the facts concerning the "osprey" or Egret plume, the remarkable fraud of the "artificial osprey" came into existence. The Egret feather was no longer to be labelled "real"; milliners' and drapers' assistants were instructed to assure lady customers that these delicate sprays were manufactured by the million out of quills and other material, by an army of factory-workers, who earned their living by this pleasant and artistic work. That the lie was detected and proclaimed by every naturalist who took one of the so-called "artificial" plumes in his hand, made no difference whatever to the persistence and assurance with which it was affirmed and repeated.

The fraud flourished until the time of the House of Lords Committee, when it became evident that the force of mere assertion and repetition, which had proved so successful with the uncritical public, would not stand investigation before a serious tribunal. The invention of "artificial ospreys" was suddenly discarded for that of "moulted feathers." The "artificial" osprey was admitted to be real, but it was no longer cruel to wear real plumes—they had been simply "picked up."

**Fiction versus Fact.**

The possibility of an imitation osprey was never denied by the Society; that such a thing might be made by ingenious manufacturers was pretty certain, though it could never stand the

simple tests which at once reveal the true feather ; and in all probability it would have been placed on the market if the plume-trade had had the least desire to see it there. Obviously their interest would not be served by the superseding of their own commodity, a commodity, moreover, which was to hand through their agents and cost little in wages for preparation.

Similarly, a few soiled Egret plumes may be picked up and come into the market, together with the admittedly superior ones taken from the slaughtered bird ; and it is credible that some landowners may be making strong efforts to keep the destructive plume-hunter off their lands by such laws as can be hoped for on the vast lands and swamps of Venezuela ; but neither the making of hog's-bristle aigrettes, nor the effort of a State here and a landowner there to protect the birds as best they know how, alter one whit the whole character and tenor of the trade in birds' feathers, nor the quality of the statements by which it has been, and is being, defended.

### **The Aim of the R.S.P.B.**

The aim of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has been from the first to seek out facts. It investigated the facts concerning the Ostrich feather, and came to the conclusion that, although cruelty might be practised, it was not necessarily involved in the procuring of the plumes, and that the business stands on a wholly different plane from that which is dependent upon the killing of countless wild birds.

When the "artificial osprey" was heralded in the papers and in the milliners' shops, the Society asked, again and again, to be furnished with an artificial plume and to be directed to the factory where such things were made. As neither request was ever complied with, and as it was proved that the feathers of the Heron and Egret were being widely sold as artificial, it was only possible to form only one conclusion. (See p. 39.)

When, shortly after the House of Lords Committee made its report, a letter signed "Leon Laglaize" was being circulated, the Society took the same course. The letter did not commend itself to serious attention, since it was issued without the name of recipient or publisher, and contained a statement with regard

to Herons' nests which was obviously untrue. Nevertheless the Society wrote to the British representatives in the country concerned and published their replies in full. The proceeding of the trade in quoting a short extract from this evidence and suppressing the rest needs no comment.

## Venezuela.

Mr Downham says :

"The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has published, with one exception, nothing more than empty contradictions from people who have no experience or knowledge of the particular country or the conditions under which the feathers are collected. . . The one exception, confirming the evidence obtained by the trade, is contained in a letter from H.B.M. Minister in Venezuela, under date of January 14th, 1909, directed to the R.S.P.B., and although it does not fully agree with all that has been published by the trade on the subject, it is undoubtedly a report which has been issued only after very careful investigations."—"The Feather Trade," p. 30.

## H.B.M. Minister's Statement.

One portion of this Report which "does not fully agree with all that has been published by the trade," is His Majesty's Minister's verdict upon the evidence furnished to him, and by him to the Society :

"From the evidence before me I have no manner of doubt that the vast majority of the Egret plumes exported to Europe are obtained by the slaughter of the birds during or about the breeding season, and that no effective regulations exist or indeed, owing to local conditions, can exist for the control of this slaughter, and that the letter of Mr. Leon Laglaize, of July 29th, 1908, gives a *completely erroneous* impression of the conditions under which the industry of collecting the plumes is conducted in Venezuela."

Other letters received by the Society are given on page 52 and onwards.

## Bird-Skins and Wings.

The plumes of the Egrets and Herons form but a fraction, though a significant fraction, of the whole trade. With regard to the thousands of birds whose skins and wings are brought

into the mart, no allegation of "artificial" or "moulted feathers" can be maintained—no person has dared to invent such a fable. They may be sold as "poultry" feathers or as "manufactured" feathers to the unsuspecting purchasers. Efforts, too, may be made to prevent the details of sales from being made public. It may be argued that birds are catalogued for which there is known to be no market; that the names by which they are catalogued are not the correct names; that certain birds cannot be nearing extermination because there are still recesses of forest and swamp which the hunters have not yet penetrated. But unanswerable facts remain.

## III.

## DESTRUCTION AND EXTERMINATION.

With regard to the questions of the extermination of species, and the destruction of rare birds, it has been already shown that the Society for the Protection of Birds has never cited the plume-trade as the only cause of the decrease or extermination of birds. The fact that there are other and inevitable causes for the disappearance of birds renders it the more necessary to check preventable waste of bird-life. Neither has the Society ever maintained that a threatened extermination of species is the sole reason for dealing with the plume-hunter. If it be to a limited extent true that the hunters do not actually seek out the last survivors of a species, this affords no reason why any form of bird-life should be reduced even to scarcity, or should be brought so low, either as a member of the avi-fauna of the world, or of a particular country or district, as to be within measurable distance of extermination. There is no sufficient reason why a single colony of harmless and beautiful birds should be "wiped out" or "used up" for so paltry a purpose as millinery trimming.

## Rare Species.

The arguments advanced by the trade amount to this: If a very small number of a given species are offered for sale, they come "accidentally." "If," says Mr. Downham (much virtue in "If.")

"If rare birds come to the sale-rooms from time to time it is because those who killed them, and who would have killed them in any case for sport or food, have sent the skins on the off-chance of their purchase by collectors."

Readers of "The Feather Trade" may picture the native of New Guinea, or the traveller in Mexico, cooking his blue Bird-of-Paradise or his Quetzal, and carefully saving the skin to forward

to Houndsditch in the hopes of a bid from the Natural History Museum! But Houndsditch, it would seem, does not know them when they come. Mr. Buckland cites an instance of twelve of the rare blue, or Prince Rudolph Bird-of-Paradise being found by him amongst the skins in Cutler Street; "10 Birds-of-Paradise, blue, dull," being the catalogue description afforded of female and unfledged male birds.\*

These are the birds, presumably, that come by units. Should they be represented by, say, a couple of hundred in a year of such a rare species as the Lyre-bird, we are asked to believe that so small a number proves—not that the bird is being extirpated and larger numbers cannot be obtained—but that as the trade has secured so few it cannot be the plume-hunters who are endangering the species!

### The "Waste Material" Theory.

Should, however, some species be represented by thousands or tens of thousands, suggesting to scientific men the shooting out of whole colonies, the upholders of the feather-trade argue, with equal facility, that if so many birds are to be had there must be plenty left behind. If it is proved that birds are being recklessly killed in one district, it is held to be a satisfactory answer that there are unexplored wilds where the hunter has not penetrated—yet. When American bird-lovers passionately denounce the traders who have filched from them their Herons and Ibises and Spoonbills, Mr. Downham seeks to soothe them with the assurance that he has read in a recent book of the existence of Herons and Spoonbills in Spain. According to this ingenious spokesman of the trade, it is never, under any circumstances, the trade that is at fault, never the trade which kills. At most it is merely the dog which trots behind and picks up the birds, getting the feathers by way of reward. When man opens up a new land, we are assured, he naturally shoots "all that runs or flies," and the plume-hunter follows in his wake in order to utilize "waste material" in making ornaments "which some women insist

\* *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, December, 1909.

upon wearing." In the forest and the swamp, and on the remote island, where there is no one to see and to note, in Guiana and Papua and Brazil and the Congo, and the islands of the Pacific, the plume-hunter's ravages are but an economic salvage of waste material!

Could the veriest child credit such absurdities? This, we are to suppose, is why the plume-hunter is held at bay by force of arms and by stringent laws in civilized lands; this is why such reports as the following constantly come from countries where naturalists write of the facts within their own experience:

### Extermination in Florida.

"The brutal savagery, which is characteristic of this phase of bird destruction has been well illustrated in the extermination of Egrets of the United States. Twenty-five years ago these beautiful birds were abundant in some Southern states. They are shy birds during most of the year, feeding chiefly in deep swamps and along lonely water courses. In the breeding season they gather into heronries. Then much of their shyness disappears under the stress of providing for their young. . . Nesting-time was the plume-hunter's opportunity. So the old birds were shot, the plumes stripped from their backs, and the young left to starve in the nest or become the prey of hawks, crows or vultures. When I was in Florida in 1878 one heronry was estimated to contain three million birds. Now they are practically extirpated. They have been pursued along the coasts of Mexico and into Central and South America. The search is extending into all countries where they may be found. Half-savage Indians and negroes are enlisted in the slaughter, supplied with guns and ammunition, and sent wherever they can find the birds. A similar slaughter took place among the sea-birds along the Atlantic coast. The birds were shot down on their breeding grounds and their wings cut off. In Massachusetts this trade bore most heavily upon the Gulls and Terns."—"Useful Birds and their Protection," by E. H. Forbush, Ornithologist to the Massachusetts Board of Agriculture: 1907.

## Terns.

“Your President was greatly pleased to find a young Tern just able to fly, near the shore of Great Island, N.Y. . . Thousands of them used to breed in that locality up to the year 1883-4, when they were mercilessly slaughtered for millinery.”—National Audubon Association Report, 1906.

“The colony of Lesser Terns on Cobb’s Island, Virginia, has been thoroughly annihilated for millinery purposes. Our guides told us of the immense numbers of these birds that were slaughtered within the past few years ; the figures were almost incredible. He and nearly all the gunners and fishermen on the coast took a hand in the game and they kept at it until the last one was gone, though at first the supply seemed inexhaustible.”—Reports on Bird Colonies in Virginia, by A. C. Bent, 1907.

## Tern and Albatross.

As many as 18,000 of one species of Tern (catalogued as “Dominoes”) were listed for a single sale in 1908, and large numbers continue to come in. Mr Bryan, United States Special Inspector of Animals and Birds, reported to his Government in 1904, having been “appalled by the destruction of birds on the North Pacific Islands,” hundreds of thousands having been killed by plume-hunters. On Marcus Island they “had wiped out of existence one of the largest Albatross colonies in these waters,” and Midway Island was “covered with great heaps of Albatross carcasses, which a crew of poachers had left to rot on the ground after the quill feathers had been pulled out of each bird.” The United States steamer *Thetis*, sent to stop illegal plume-hunting on one of the Hawaiian islets, found that the hunters had already destroyed some 300,000 birds on this breeding station.

## The Lyre-Bird.

The Lyre-Bird of New South Wales is fast becoming extinct. It is strictly protected by law ; but 80 tails were catalogued at

the London plume sale of August, 1907 ; 100 at the December sale ; while in 1905 twelve dozen were sold at Sydney for exportation to London.—*Sydney Morning Herald*, September 15, 1905.

### The Emu.

“The wild Emus are rapidly being exterminated, and I believe that it is entirely from these that the emu feather boas are manufactured.”—Dr. Graham Renshaw (Letter to the S.P.B., 1903).

### The Grebe.

“Over most of the country the Grebes are known only as migrants, when they are so wary and expert in diving that they are well prepared to take care of themselves. But on the breeding grounds all is different. . . . The Grebes followed close after me, or, diving, came up again only a few feet away, cackling and scolding, as they tried to drive or coax me away from their nests, boldly offering their lives for the safety of their homes. . . . Harmless, beautiful, defenceless, they fill the place among birds which the fur seals do among mammals, and their doom seems as sure and as sad. While among the nests watching the brave, beautiful little people building and guarding their homes and caring for their young, I could hear the guns of the skin-hunters along the shores of the lake all day, and I was told that from early spring until the lakes freeze in fall, the trade goes on, though most successfully during the breeding season.”—Vernon Bailey, Biological Survey, U.S.A.

Mr. Finley writes (1905) of finding sixty Grebes' nests in a single small island. We found but one nest, and saw only an occasional wary bird. Skinned bodies floating here and there told the story of their disappearance. A Grebe-hunter summed up the situation by saying that when the price fell to fifteen cents. they were not worth hunting, but now that they had gone up to fifty cents. there was money in it. . . . No stockbroker keeps his eye more keenly on the tape than

he on the quotations of the feather-markets, which the dealers see that he duly receives.”—F. M. Chapman, in “Bird Lore,” August, 1906.

### The Impeyan Pheasant.

“In some districts seems to have been extremely numerous not so many years ago, but this is not so now, for the cocks have been killed by thousands to meet the plume-market.” (Newton, “Dictionary of Birds.”) Though exportation from India is illegal, these skins continue to come into the auction-room.

### Egrets and Spoonbills.

“It has long been our desire to include the White Heron in the series of habitat groups (in the American Museum of Natural History), but plume-hunters have brought this bird so near the verge of extermination that our efforts to find a rookery in which suitable studies might be made have been fruitless. However, in February, 1907, information was received of the existence of a colony. . . . When the ground on which the rookery is situated was acquired by the club now owning it, the plume-hunters had nearly exterminated the aigrette-bearing Herons which formerly inhabited it in large numbers. A few had escaped. . . . A former plumer, now chief warden in charge of the preserve, stated that both the Snowy Egret and the Roseate Spoonbill were once found in the region, but their complete annihilation left no stock which, under protection, might have proved the source of progeny.”—F. M. Chapman (Curator, American Museum of Natural History, New York).

### London Feather-sales.

In evidence prepared for the House of Lords Committee by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the following figures were quoted from catalogues of the London Feather-sales, as affording illustration of the numbers of skins and feathers

dealt with. There are six sales during the year, but the numbers are those put up for sale on the dates given :

Crowned Pigeons	..	7,660	..	June 10th, 1908
"	"	5,000	..	April 14th, 1908
"	"	10,700	..	February 11th, 1908
"	"	4,818	..	December 17th, 1907
"	"	3,940	..	October 14th, 1907
"	"	7,000	..	February 12th, 1907
Sooty Tern	..	16,500	..	June 10th, 1908
"	..	16,700	..	April 14th, 1908
"	..	18,000	..	February 11th, 1908
Impeyan Pheasants	..	272	..	April, 14th, 1908
"	"	300	..	December 17th, 1907
"	"	261	..	June 11th, 1907
"	"	346	..	April 16th, 1907
"	"	138	..	February 12th, 1907
"	"	191	..	December 11th, 1906
Kingfishers	..	20,615	..	June 11th, 1907
"	..	15,000	..	April 11th, 1906
Terns	..	14,400	..	April 11th, 1906
Albatross Quills	..	15,000	..	February 12th, 1907
Rhea Feathers	..	26 cases	..	June 11th, 1907

To these may be added : 17,940 Sooty Terns, February, 1908 ; 4,373 Crowned Pigeons, October, 1908 ; 2,149 Crowned Pigeons, August, 1909.

			Osprey packages.		Birds of Paradise.
February 12th	..	..	504	..	4,728
April 6th	..	..	422	..	3,831
June 11th	..	..	348	..	4,244
August 2nd	..	..	315	..	3,831
October 15th	..	..	548	..	7,000
December 17th	..	..	200	..	4,667
During 1906 :—					
February	..	..	327	..	8,508
April	..	..	260	..	7,188
June	..	..	289	..	11,841
August	..	..	242	..	3,948
October	..	..	485	..	5,700
December	..	..	265	..	3,600

The quantity of feathers to a " package " varies greatly, but the 1,411 packages catalogued in the last six months of 1907 were admitted to represent 115,000 birds.

## Quills.

Among the bundles of quills are those of Eagle and Hawk and Crane, Pelican and Osprey, and Bustard ; the handsome Soldier or Jabiru Storks come in as " Albatross " ; the " Vulture " quills are neither vulture nor quills, being the body feathers of the Rhea, the wild Ostrich of South America.

## Evidence from Sale-room and Catalogue.

Shortly after the Importation of Plumage Prohibition Bill had passed through the House of Lords in 1908, the trade stopped detailed advertisements of their sales, and ceased to publish any reports on them in the " Public Ledger." They now contend that figures from catalogues are misleading, as the same consignment of birds may be offered many times. Humming-birds, which continue to appear in cratefulls, have been unsaleable, according to Mr. Downham, for twenty years ; yet at the sale on February 7th, 1911, one firm catalogued no fewer than 20,820 of these birds. In 1905 a different firm put up 12,500. If this is the supply in the market of birds which are not wanted and not used, and have not been wanted for twenty years, it is difficult to imagine the reckless slaughter which must be perpetrated and the numbers that must be killed of birds which are in active demand.

## " Not Wanted."

The fact that a particular bird is not wanted for the time being is no proof of its safety. As in the case of the Grebe, it may suddenly be again declared " fashionable." It is stated also by Mr. Downham, that some birds are brought into the market merely as an experiment. They are killed, not because there is a demand for them, but on the chance that the demand may be created. This again shows the danger in which every species of finely-plumaged birds stands until legislation interferes.

Visitors (there are very few, and they are not welcomed) to the Cutler Street warehouse can see for themselves the piles of brilliant bodies of Trogons from Guatemala, Cocks-of-the-rock from Guiana, Toucans, with their wonderful beaks sliced through to form a " handle " for the adjacent breast-plumes ; Orioles, bright-hued Finches, Tanagers, Crowned Pigeons from New Guinea,

Emu skins, wings of Sea-Swallows, hundreds and thousands of quills; and tumbled in among the "various bird-skins," which have no names, will be found little Flycatchers and Cuckoos and sober-plumaged bodies that seem to offer no special target for the hunter. Very possibly in this mixed bag many a strange and rare species is "knocked down" without recognition: for plume dealers are not ornithologists.

### Game-Birds and Poultry.

The trade dwells a good deal on the use made of game birds and of poultry. This suggests the need of precaution in any legislation. The Goura Pigeon of a single land, the Impeyan Pheasant of the Himalayas, the Argus Pheasant, the Chinese Pheasant, are included in the milliner's idea of "game." In 1899 the Society for the Protection of Birds in China (Shanghai) memorialized the Government on the subject of "the great and rapidly increasing destruction at present overtaking the Pheasant in China":

"The trade to which we refer is that which, originating in the exigencies of fashion, calls for the export of the entire skin of the Pheasant, and its ravages, even at its present initial rate, are sufficient to threaten the species with extinction. The necessities of such a trade recognize no 'close season'; feathers and skins taken in breeding time are well suited to the requirements of the market." \*

### Shore Birds.

"There are included in the Limicolæ several species that are game birds in name only, their bodies being so small that they possess no value whatever for food purposes. Thousands and thousands of these beautiful and graceful creatures have been slaughtered solely for their plumage, their diminutive bodies not being considered of enough value to send to market."—Report of National Audubon Association, 1906.

\* "Celestial Empire" (Shanghai), Sept. 11, 1899.

## The Willow Grouse.

In "A Russian Province of the North," by Alexander Platonovich Engelhardt, Governor of the Province of Archangel, translated by H. Cooke, H.M. Consul at Archangel, the author writes of Willow Grouse ("Koropatki"): "We brought back on the *Nordenskiold* a cargo of 600 poods, or nearly *ten tons*, of these wings. They are exported from Archangel to serve as trimmings for ladies' hats. The white plumage has this special advantage, among others—that it can be dyed any colour, and in this way be converted into the feathers of parrots, or any other bird, for selling purposes." "The glossy skins of Black-throated Divers' necks are also, to my knowledge," says Mr. Harvie-Brown, the well-known ornithologist, "sold in vast quantities at Archangel for trimmings. Is it not shameful that such birds, even if still abundant as 'Koropatki,' should be killed simply for their plumage?"

## IV.

## THE PLUMAGE IMPORTATION BILL.

## A.—THE LABOUR QUESTION.

It is a favourite contention of the trade, that :

“The Bill, if passed, will throw out of employment thousands of British workpeople, without protecting the life of a single bird.”—“The Feather Trade,” p. 119.

To which statement Mr. Downham adds: “We have thousands of workmen and workwomen to consider.”

**British Labour.**

The question of the thousands of workpeople may be considered first. Fashion has never shown the slightest inclination to consider the case of workpeople injured in a change of materials or of trimmings. It has not even considered the case of the manufacturers. The fancy feather-trade is, however, happily one in which the industrial question is very little involved, as the material gives less labour to the working-class than probably any other kind of trimming that could be, and would be, employed in its place. The profit does not go to pay the wages of a large number of hands ; it goes to the few firms who conduct the business. This was brought out very clearly in the examination of trade witnesses before the House of Lords Committee. It was then shown that of the imported feathers 80 per cent. go out of England to be made up in foreign factories ; with 80 per cent. of the goods English labour has therefore nothing to do. The remaining 20 per cent. give employment during a portion of the year only, to young women who are engaged at other times in manipulating ostrich feathers and making artificial flowers. One trade witness said :

“The trade does not go on always ; it is mostly in the fall of the year when these birds are employed. In the summer season our firm makes artificial flowers, and other people employ themselves with ostrich feathers.”

Should the plumage of wild birds be no longer obtainable, ostrich feathers and poultry feathers will remain ; and there can

be no doubt that the use of artificial flowers and berries, and of ribbons and fancy ornaments, would increase and would give more employment in the labour market than is now given by the importation of wild-bird plumage. "You say," said Lord Avebury, in questioning Messrs. Sciama's representative, at the Committee,

(Q. 270) "You say that the Bill would diminish the demand for labour in this country, but as it would replace a certain quantity of feathers, which are grown abroad, by a certain quantity of articles which are made in this country, clearly it must tend to increase the demand for labour in this country?"

What had Mr. Downham to say about his thousands of workmen and workwomen? He said:

"On the question of labour, there may not be so much difference one way or the other; but I cannot admit that it would increase under the Bill."

### The Plume-hunter.

The plume-traders have always alleged deep interest in the welfare of the workers. The public was constantly told that the "artificial" plume (which had no existence) gave labour to thousands of hands. Other trade-philanthropists have made capital out of the needs of the hypothetical Indian who was saved from starvation by picking up Egret plumes. How did the poor Indian live through the centuries before Egrets were hunted?

(Q 568) "This (the collection of plumes) finds great employment, you must remember, for a number of these Indians, who would be starved otherwise."—Mr. M. Hale, before the H.L. Committee.

Unimpassioned writers have affirmed that the professional plumer is not usually a deserving member of society in any country; but it is hard on his friends that Mr. Downham now gives the case away in seeking to establish that for the Venezuelan garcero. Mr. Laglaize, we are told,

"Has been largely instrumental in pointing out to the American estate owners the importance of preserving their garceros against the attacks of the Indians, who would kill any living thing, valuable or not."—"The Feather Trade," p. 36.)

### Osprey and Horsehair.

To make up the tale of workpeople, the trade now propose to include in the list of those whose employment will be gone, the men who handle the goods in the docks, and the assistants in the feather departments of drapers' shops. Perhaps there should also be included the purveyors of the horsehair that comes over as top-dressing for smuggled bird-skins (See page 63.) On the other hand might be urged the increased work afforded, not only to the young ladies in the artificial-flower side of retail businesses, but the workers in all those factories (in the air) which the trade not long ago swore were engaged in the manufacture of artificial ospreys. If, as a witness for the trade stated to the Committee on July 8th, 1908, "ospreys" can be made so perfectly from horsehair that no one but an expert can tell the difference, by all means let cases of horsehair be imported, without the underlying strata of bird-skins and Egret plumes !

## V.

## THE PLUMAGE IMPORTATION BILL.

## B.—PRESERVATION OF BIRDS.

The statement that the passing of the Bill will not protect the life of a single bird is untenable. It is founded on the allegation that the trade will go on just the same, with its head-quarters in Hamburg or some other Continental port instead of in England; and that English women will flock over to the Continent to buy the plumes prohibited by British law. The latter argument requires little attention. When ladies cease to see the feathers in milliners' shops and cease to be importuned to buy them, they will cease to wish for them, and will buy new hats as frequently and as happily, with trimmings of dainty ribbon and flower; and many milliners will experience a pleasant relief in no longer being compelled to apologise or lie in order to sell their goods. No one credits the story of Englishwomen of all classes swarming over to France and Germany for the sake of persisting in a discredited mode. It may even be that some of the small percentage of women who now buy, and may still buy, their millinery abroad, will perceive the odium attaching to a species of ornament condemned by their country's laws. So far the majority of women have not realised the meaning of the trade or the gravity of the objections to it. An Act of Parliament will throw a strong light on the matter. Obviously, therefore, the birds killed to supply the bulk of the British market will be saved.

**The British Empire.**

It is an undeniable fact that an anti-Importation Law in Great Britain would strengthen and uphold protection and export laws made in other parts of the Empire.

"I am quite sure," said Colonel Ryan, the deputed representative of the Commonwealth of Australia to the House of Lords enquiry, "that such legislation would be an inestimable boon to Australia. . . We should hail with the greatest delight the passing of such an Act."

"An import duty," said Lord Stanmore, who has acted as Governor of New Brunswick, Trinidad, Mauritius, Fiji, New Zealand and Ceylon, "would unquestionably strengthen legislation on the part of the Colonies. An import duty is a natural complement to the export duty in the Colony."

"My personal opinion, as a Customs officer," said Mr. C. G. Todhunter, late Collector of Customs at Madras, "is that the Bill would be most useful and helpful."

A memorial was, in November, 1910, presented to the Colonial Secretary from the self-governing Colonies of South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia, calling attention to the manner in which Colonial ordinances for the protection of plume-birds are frustrated by illicit export. The Importation Bill would give the Customs power to seize and deal with smuggled goods.

It is, then, evident that the life of birds of the British Colonies and Dependencies will be protected by the proposed Act.

The effect, however, will not stop short with the confines of the British Empire.

### **The United States.**

"America cannot protect her own birds if the countries of the Old World offer a market for the plumage of American birds, as they are now doing. . . The milliners demand a dead bird and require that it shall be killed at a season of the year when it is in its best plumage, that is, during the period of reproduction, the result being decrease and eventual extermination."—Paper read by Mr. W. Dutcher at the Fifth International Ornithological Congress at Berlin, June, 1910.

Mr. Downham, in seeking to explain away the smuggling business, says that "the trade cannot control consignments to a free market."

Therefore Bird Protectors say :

“Close the great free market of London, and the Bird Protection laws of America and of every other country will be strengthened.”

### A Foreign Trade.

If the birds of the British Empire, and the birds that would otherwise be killed to supply the English shops, are saved, the trade, say its members, will flourish all the same on the Continent, but England will lose her share in the profits on it.

To this the answer might be given that England would be well rid of her profits in such a business, and that when a trade is shown to have evil consequences and to be against the interests of the world at large, it is not the character of English people to pause to consider that if England washed her hands there are other people who will be not so particular. There is, however, no necessity to appeal to this sentiment.

The trade at present is not an English one. It is essentially a foreign trade. The feathers are brought into London, but it has been shown that 80 per cent. of them leave the country as they came. There is no import duty, and on that proportion no industrial workers have been employed. The buyer and the seller in Mincing Lane are the only persons concerned with it. The firms of feather-merchants who are so anxious about the British interests are Messrs. Sciana & Co., Eugene Hanneguy, S. H. Weiler, G. K. Dunstall and Emil Mosbacher. The committee of the Eastern Millinery Association which fought the New York Bird Protection Bill were Messrs. Zucker, Herman, Goldzier, Sommerich, Blumenthal and Judkins; and the officers of the New York Feather Importers' Association at that time (1909) were Messrs Ph. Adelson, M. Lehman, G. Silva (of Sciana & Co.) and Lucian Selz. Great Britain and the United States owe much to the numerous foreign merchants doing business of many kinds within their cities; but when these gentlemen betray great anxiety as to the result to England if their trade departs from this country, it is not unreasonable to suspect that the anxiety is more concerned with the trade than with the country.

If the Importation Act would not save a single bird, and if the business would merely be transferred to a German port, feather-traders would not trouble themselves greatly about it. That they are fighting with might and main, and with every argument on which they can lay hands, is proof that they are desperately afraid of the effect on the whole Continent and on America of such a law passing through the British Parliament. They know that foreign legislatures would follow British example and that the birds would be saved.

At the International Ornithological Conference, held in Berlin in May-June, 1910, an International Committee of Ornithologists was formed, in order to consider the means for obtaining international laws for the protection of birds killed for the plume-market. The countries represented on the Committee are: Great Britain, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States of America.

A Colonial Office Committee was appointed by the Colonial Secretary (Lord Crewe) in 1910, to investigate the facts with reference to the birds of the British Empire. The Committee consists of Dr. Sidney Harmer, F.R.S., Mr. W. R. Ogilvie-Grant, and Mr. C. E. Fagan, for the Natural History Museum; Mr. H. J. Read, Mr. G. W. Johnson, and Mr. R. E. Stubb, for the Colonial Office; the Hon. E. S. Montagu, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for India, and Mr. Percy Illingworth, for the Board of Trade.

A petition from the self-governing Colonies of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, calling attention to the manner in which Colonial ordinances for the protection of plume-birds are frustrated by illicit export, was presented to the Colonial Secretary (Mr. Harcourt) in November by Mr. Buckland.

## VI.

## THE TRADE PROPOSITION.

The writer of "The Feather Trade" states that the trade is willing to enter into a species of partnership with Bird Protectors who will "leave their slang dictionaries and their platform rhetoric behind them," and enter into an agreement with the leading trade-firms.

When a man offers himself to another as partner, it is usual for that other—if he possess any common-sense—to enquire into the antecedents and the probity of the would-be partner. Bird Protectors in like manner naturally look into the antecedents of the feather-trade. Previous pages have brought out a few of the facts connected with that subject. The trade deny the killing of birds in the close season; it is known that this has been the rule. They deny the extermination of the Egrets of Florida; reference to pp. 12, 22, 54, is all that is needed on this point. They deny responsibility for smuggling; it is proved that smuggling has been carried on. For years they professed and asseverated that "ospreys" were "artificial"; this was proved to be an unqualified lie. They have, again and again, mis-stated and perverted facts, suppressed evidence, evaded questions, disseminated false statements.

A single paragraph may be cited from their apology. It occurs on page 117:

"The statement that the plumage is cut from the birds 'before they are half-dead,' and that the young ones are left to starve, is a gross fabrication, and absurd.

His Majesty's Minister at Caracas has borne witness to the fact that a very considerable proportion of the White Herons are preserved in heronries (garceros) by rich land-owners, and the moulted feathers are picked up at the end of the breeding season.

Ample evidence that the plumes are taken in the nesting-time, and the young birds left to starve, is given on pages 12, 22, 46, 50, 51.

His Majesty's Minister said nothing to this effect. What he did say was: "I have no manner of doubt that the vast majority of the Egret plumes exported to Europe are obtained by the slaughter of the birds during or about the breeding season."\*

\* "Moulted Plumes," R.S.P.B. Leaflet, No. 60; "How Osprey Feathers are Procured," R.S.P.B. Leaflet, No. 61.

The trade estimates that the supply of moulted feathers makes up by far the greater part of the total consignments from Venezuela, where the shooting of an Egret is now an indictable offence."

In 1910 a decree forbidding the shooting of Egrets was made in one small sub-State of Venezuela, in consequence of the destruction by plume-hunters. Its efficacy is as yet unknown.

Here, then, are three direct perversions of plain fact. No more need be said to indicate the methods adopted by the feather-trade's exponent.

"Is it too much to ask," enquires Mr. Downham, that Bird Protectors shall ally themselves with the trade which he represents, accept its "assistance," and in return give the assurances it proposes to "demand" that the trade shall "no longer be harassed" ?

It is certainly a great deal too much to concede.

## PART II.

## CHAPTER THE FIRST.

## ARTIFICIAL OSPREYS.

ALTHOUGH the "artificial osprey" is at present held in abeyance, it has for so many years occupied a prominent place in the tactics of the plume-market that a brief history of this million-tongued lie can hardly be omitted from any re-statement of the plumage question. Thousands of women have been deceived into buying Egret feathers by the false assertion that they were not Egret feathers, and even now the fable lingers in provincial shops. From the first day when milliners were instructed to sell their ospreys as "artificial" if they could not sell them as "real," to the day when a trade witness before the House of Lords Committee clung to the expiring fraud, but could not produce one specimen of the article for examination, no "artificial osprey" was ever placed in an ornithologist's hand. It may pretty safely be said that no "artificial osprey" was ever made.

Ladies were told that these things were manufactured from quills, ivory, silk, wood, the feathers of poultry, etc.; that they could not be sold so cheaply if they were "real" feathers; that they could not be sold so cheaply if they were manufactured. It was all one lie. As Dr. Bowdler Sharpe wrote on one occasion to the Society for the Protection of Birds, when an "osprey," bought as "artificial," had been forwarded to him—"I need hardly tell you that it is the same old osprey—the nuptial plume of the Heron or Egret."

Sir William Flower, the Director of the Natural History Museum, wrote to the "Times" in 1896\* to protest against this "monstrous fiction," saying that:

"One of the most beautiful of birds is being swept off the face of the earth, under circumstances of peculiar cruelty, bolstered up by a glaring falsehood."

Sir Edwin Ray Lankester, interviewed by the "Daily News" in 1903, said :

"An osprey has never been imitated, and, whatever the shopkeeper may say, it is always the parent bird, slain at the breeding season, which supplies women's hats and bonnets."

The Society purchased from a score of West-end shops in 1903 specimens of "ospreys," which were sold and invoiced as "artificial"; proved them to be Egret plumes, and published the story of the lie far and wide.\*

Mr. W. P. Pycraft, of the Natural History Museum, wrote in "Knowledge," June, 1904 :

"The statements that imitation or artificial 'ospreys' are made of split quills, whalebone, or other material, are all absolutely false."

### No Answer.

Did the trade, on being thus indicted, refute the charge by sending specimens of the plumes they pretended to manufacture, to Sir William Flower, to Professor Lankester, to Mr. Pycraft, to the Society? No. They merely continued to repeat the "glaring falsehood" to ignorant ears. One instance may be given. When Professor Lankester had spoken, the representative of an evening newspaper interviewed some members of the trade.† He was told that ospreys were made of cotton, of vultures, of "a secret substance," and that over a thousand hands were employed on the industry in London. The Society asked in the columns of the same paper for the address of one factory where such an industry was carried on. There was no answer. The newspaper privately supplied the name of the firm responsible for the statement, and the Society wrote to the firm. "Your letter," wrote the firm, in reply, "shall receive attention." Needless to say, that was the only reply ever received. No other reply could presumably be given when it was feared that investigation would follow.

\* "The Biography of a Lie," R.S.P.B. Leaflet, No. 49.

† "St. James's Gazette," May, 1904.

## CHAPTER THE SECOND.

### THE MOULTED PLUME.

The story that in certain places plume-hunters pick up vast supplies of beautiful feathers which Herons and Egrets drop in the moulting season, has been heard once and again during the last twelve or fifteen years, varied by a tale of still more distant lands where Egrets were said to be domesticated on farms.

On these foundations has risen the specious argument that since there are Ostrich farms, why not Egret farms, where the birds could be bred and the feathers cut off or systematically collected? Those who argue thus overlook the fact that Herons and Egrets are not flightless birds which can be herded in paddocks to be clipped, but shy, winged species, which build in trees by lake and swamp, and for the rest of the year scatter themselves over wide expanses of country. The light and delicate nuptial plumes are worn throughout the nesting and brooding period, and at the end of this time are shed on the marshland in a torn and draggled condition. Even when the birds are shot with their plumes in full beauty, the stain of swamp water will lessen the value of the thread-like filaments. The trade admit that these so-called moulted plumes are inferior,\* but are anxious that the public should believe that they form the greater part of those brought into the market.

When the "moulted plumes" theory was started they were said to be picked up on the walls of China; but the Heron has now been practically exterminated in many of the more accessible parts of China. One illustration of the manner in which this

\* "Ospreys: We have always been of opinion that a large proportion of the feathers are dead feathers. They are quite different from the other feathers. They are brittle and obviously perished."—Mr. G. K. Dunstall (feather-merchant) before the H.L. Committee.

"There may be a few that the hunters call *chasse*, that is to say, they are hunted, shot by the hunters, and these plumes, if they are on the bird, are naturally much better than those that are picked off the ground when they are moulted."—Mr. Downham, *ibid.*

came about was told in the "Cornhill Magazine" (October, 1899) by Mrs. Archibald Little, who recounts how a heronry was destroyed at Chungking, "in the way of business," for £50 worth of plumes.\*

There have also been accounts, given in anonymous letters to newspapers, of square miles of country in India, "white with shed feathers," "lying in sheets like snow"; another writer avowed his familiarity with the birds and the moulted plumes in Nigeria; but, unfortunately for his reputation as a naturalist, he also described the plumes as growing on the "breast" of the bird.

### The Fabled Farm in Tunis.

Another circumstantial story appeared in French and German papers some years ago of an institution near Tunis, where the birds were reported to be kept in a large aviary and "deplumed" twice a year. Dr. Sclater, who was then Secretary of the London Zoological Society, used every effort to discover the source of this story, as no one knew better than he the extreme difficulty of inducing the Egret to breed in any sort of captivity. None could be ascertained; but ultimately the mystery was tracked down by Mr. Scherren to a brief and luckless experiment made by a German banker, who, at the instigation of a French taxidermist, tried to breed Herons in North Africa.† Whether any plumes found their way to the market is not stated, but the banker lost his money, and the taxidermist disappeared.

South America is, however, the only country now cited by the plume-trade in connection with the picked-up moulted plume business.

### Venezuela: Consular Report.

In the Consular report on the trade of Venezuela for 1898, special attention was called to "the destruction of the birds for the supply of 'aigrettes' for ladies' hats." "This," said the Consul, "is really appalling," showing that, on an average computation, a million and a half birds had been killed in the preceding year. This statement was widely published and

\* "Our Pet Herons." R.S.P.B. Leaflet, No. 35.

† "Canary and Cage Bird Life," Jan. 29, 1909; "Wild und Hund," Dec. 4, 1908.

commented on at the time, and no question was raised as to the accuracy of the Blue Book figures. It is now vehemently controverted by the spokesman of the feather-trade, who roundly declares that these figures from the official Report are the "platform mathematics" of "one of the purveyors of sensational statements," though in the next paragraph he quotes their source. In a letter dated July 29, 1910, the London Chamber of Commerce asked the Consul at Ciudad Bolivar for the "correct analysed returns" for 1898, having at the same time "reason to believe that no analysis of the feather exports was undertaken before 1905," and knowing that the feathers exported from Venezuela are "mainly Egret feathers." It is to be noted that this enquiry of the trade was not made until eleven years after the return was published. It is, therefore, not surprising that no official analysis could be supplied, and that the Acting Consul could merely furnish figures obtained from the exporters themselves. According to these the export was about the same then that it is now declared to be.

It is also to be noted that in this application to the Consulate the trade make no comment on the statement that the birds were "killed."

### "Picked up" and "Picked out."

"The Times" in 1900 published a description of plume-hunting, as carried on in the United States, and following on this came a letter signed "K. Thomson," alleging the collection of moulted feathers in Nicaragua and Venezuela. The writer averred that the birds "being gifted with long necks," were so shy and difficult of approach that it could never pay to attempt to kill them on their roosting-trees,\* and consequently the hunters only went round and picked up the cast plumes; also that these same birds were so easily domesticated that one or two were "kept at every house, and were very useful for killing vermin." Unhappily, this witness like other witnesses called by the feather-trade, was weak in his natural history; he said that only the male Egret bore the plumes, and that as the bird lifted them "after the style

\* The roosting-trees are not the building-places, and it is on the latter that the birds are killed as they remain hovering above their nests.

of a turkey," he could be picked out by any experienced man a hundred yards away, and the females were never shot. It is an elementary fact regarding Herons and Egrets that both sexes have these nuptial plumes. The writer further gave, as conclusive proof of his assertions, that he had met two Frenchmen who said they had picked up about 100 lbs. of feathers each. Doubtless these were Mr. Leon Laglaize and M. Mayeul Grisol.

For a while nothing more was heard of picked-up feathers, or of domesticated Egrets; but the moulted plume, as a definite trade asset, was practically introduced at the time of the House of Lords Committee, when members of the trade, who had no personal knowledge of South America, diverted attention from Florida and from the "artificial" osprey to this line of defence.

### Mr. Leon Laglaize.

Shortly afterwards the country was flooded with a circular headed "Importation of Plumage Bill. How the Osprey feathers are procured." It purported to have been received from a Mr. Leon Laglaize (who was described as "an eminent ornithologist and explorer"); but by whom received was not stated. Mr. Laglaize is believed to be a collector and buyer for a European feather-firm. A well-known member of the principal French Ornithological Society writes to the R.S.P.B., under date Feb. 7th, 1911: "Do you know anything about Mr. Laglaize, who has, I understand, published a book in England in support of the plumage trade? They say that he is a traveller; maybe, but also a plume-collector."

### The Heron's Nest.

Mr. Laglaize's statements have been already referred to (p. 17), and will be further dealt with presently. Among them is the following:

"After the breeding season, when the young ones leave their nests, the abandoned nests are searched and a valuable amount of feathers is collected there; the feathers have been skilfully rolled in to furnish and soften the interior of the nest. These nest feathers are of the best kind, for they have been pulled off by the bird itself before laying the eggs."

All the Heron tribe, as naturalists are aware, make loosely constructed nests of dead sticks, and never use feathers for a lining. That they should be described as plucking out their own back

plumes for this purpose was so absurd a fiction that it is judiciously omitted from the testimony of Mr. Laglaize which is printed in "The Feather Trade." However, it is evidently considered to be too good a story to be wholly lost, and so part of the statement is adopted by the trade's second witness M. Mayeul Grisol, but is transferred to another bird, the "tordito," which is described as lining its nest with quantities of Egret feathers. These, it is said, are, after the young have flown, disentangled and collected by the hunters; the bird, according to M. Grisol, builds its nest at the season when the Egrets are moulting, and the delicate filaments remain none the worse for the rearing upon them of a family of young birds!

Little need be said with respect to the testimony of M. Grisol, who states that he is personally interested in the plumage-trade and himself a dealer and collector of Egret plumes. His general assertion is that the feathers from Venezuela "are for the greater part gathered plumes, and it is exceptional for them to come from the few birds that the natives have killed for food." That natives kill but few of these birds for food is undoubtedly true.

### Evidence of recent Travellers.

Here may be cited the words of two recent travellers who are not associated with the feather-trade:

"Among the most important articles of export from Ciudad Bolivar are . . . and feathers. Of the last item the quantity is amazing when one considers what a slaughter of the feathered tribe it implies. We met a Frenchman here who was just booking for shipment to Paris several hundred thousand Egrets, the result of a three years' hunt in the forests and plains of the Orinoco basin. But he was not the only one engaged in this wholesale slaughter of birds. There were many others, and their work of despoiling the tropics of their most attractive ornaments extends to all the vast regions on both sides of the equator. The small Egret *A. candissima*, which supplies the most valuable plumes, and the large Egret *A. garzetta*,

which produces the coarser feather, are the principal victims. As only a few plumes from the backs of the birds are taken, one can readily see what terrific slaughter is required to meet the demands of the markets of the world. The worst feature about the business is that the birds are killed during the mating and breeding season. Already the result is manifest in the rapidly diminishing numbers of Egrets that frequent the garceros, the name given to the places where they nest and rear their young.”—“Up the Orinoco and Down the Magdalena,” by H. J. Mozans, A.M., Ph.D. 1910.

Mr. Mozans, it is clear, heard and saw nothing of “picked up” plumes.

“The beauty of a few feathers on their backs will be the cause of their (the Egrets’) extinction. . . . The graceful plumes which they doubtless admire in each other appealed to the vanity of the most destructive of animals, and they are doomed because the women of civilized countries continue to have the same fondness for feathers and ornaments characteristic of the savage tribes.”—“A Naturalist in the Guianas,” by Eugene André : 1904.

### Evidence of Mr. Albert Pam.

Mr. Albert Pam, a member of the Council of the Zoological Society of London, who has extensive knowledge and experience of Venezuela both as traveller and as merchant, said in evidence before the House of Lords Committee :

“The birds are undoubtedly being slaughtered in very large numbers and in the breeding season. If you wished to collect feathers you would have to walk several hundred yards for each individual plume you picked up, and in the jungle of the Amazon it would be an extremely difficult occupation. . . . The idea of their being moulted feathers may be absolutely set aside.”

Mr. Pam points out that an export of 1,000 kilogrammes of “osprey” feathers, which is, according to the traders, the average amount received from Venezuela in a year, would mean the picking up of at least two million and a half separate feathers

from a vast extent of bog and jungle and swamp. Moreover, any such feathers are dirty and comparatively worthless. Referring to a highly imaginary picture of Egrets and native hunters, which appeared on the fashion page of a London weekly journal; Mr. Pam added that it was a pity the artist did not go a little further and represent the birds as flying over the water and shedding their plumes carefully into the hunters' boats!

### Protection of Herons in Apuré.

Beyond the statements of Mr. Laglaize and M. Grisol; the evidence brought together in "The Feather Trade" consists of a decree made in 1910 by the authorities of Apuré in Venezuela, prohibiting the shooting of Herons, and imposing a tax on all feathers collected. Throughout Mr. Downham's book this new departure of a single State is spoken of as the action of "the Government of Venezuela."

One statement made is as follows :

"The Government of Venezuela has taken cognizance of the valuable trade in moulted plumages, and has decided to profit by the establishment of garceros, and at the same time to strengthen the hands of the land-owners and lessees by enforcing the rules they have made for themselves."

And another is :

"Throughout countless miles of well-nigh trackless land in the South American Continent, the birds exist in vast companies and are protected by law and custom."

Now Apuré is a district or small sub-State, consisting of one town San Fernando, on the junction of the Apuré and Orinoco Rivers, and for the rest of wild jungle country very thinly populated and, of course, wholly unpoliced. Fifty governors might make decrees, but there is no one to see that they are carried out. The character of the land where "law and custom" is supposed to ensure bird-protection is indicated by the fact that a messenger sent by a Venezuelan merchant from Caracas to San Fernando (a distance of about 200 miles) travelling overland, was twenty-three days on the journey. A decree of the Federal Government of Venezuela might, under certain circumstances, be a pronouncement carrying some weight; but a decree issued in a small and half unexplored district is, unfortunately, practically worthless. Who is to execute it?

## History of the Decree.

The actual history of the Apuré decree itself is this: The owners of garceros in the district, angered by the invasion of their property and the killing of Egrets by plume-hunters, in 1909 addressed a petition to the Governor of the Apuré Section, pointing out that in spite of heavy taxes levied on the owners of the land, the Egrets were still being exterminated. This document says:

“It is a matter of frequent occurrence to see, in the months of June, July and August, expeditions being made in canoes crossing the flooded plains and killing every Egret met with. The owners of estates upon which there are no garceros also lease certain localities, known as *comedores* (feeding grounds), or exploit them themselves with the sole aim of destroying the species.

“What guarantees have we for the preservation of our garceros or of the Egrets that are being exterminated? None indeed. But we lay ourselves open to force unless we hasten to pay the tax.

“The Guarico legislature has considered the case of the garceros to the extent of imposing heavy duties upon them—duties in many cases impossible to pay; but it has done nothing to save the poor Egrets from the imminent destruction with which they are threatened. If we continue in this way the White Egret will disappear within a very small number of years.”

## What it proves.

It is hard to see in what way this proves that law or custom protects the Egrets of “countless miles of well-nigh trackless land” from the plume-hunter. It does prove that down to 1910 he could not be prevented from killing the nesting-birds, even in the small portion of land under ownership and supposed to be within reach of law.

But the trade would have the public believe that the Apuré decree extends not only over the whole of Venezuela, but that similar protection is given to the birds in Brazil, Argentina and Columbia, and throughout South America.

## Birds of the Lower Amazon.

In 1895 and 1896 Professor Emil Goeldi, author of "The Birds of Brazil," and an honorary member of the British Ornithologists' Union, presented memorials to the State Government of Pará against the destruction for their plumes of Herons and Ibises on the Lower Amazon. As director of the Pará Museum of Natural History, he protests "in the name of common sense against the barbarous destruction of Herons that is being carried on in the lower Amazon, and would rather resign his position than fail to cry out most emphatically against one of the most scandalous crimes that is perpetrated against Nature in this beautiful region." As a naturalist he characterizes the slaughter as "a vile business," which yet "brazen-facedly shows itself in open daylight, desiring to assume in our market the appearance of a business as legitimate as any other."

Professor Goeldi repeated his protest in 1903 :

"The flocks of Herons are being decimated. . . . There are men who, every year, order a wholesale slaughter of both sexes, leaving the carcasses to rot on the spot."

In his earlier memorial, Dr. Goeldi, misled by the *canard* of the Tunisian farm (p. 42), suggested an attempt to breed Herons on the Tunisian plan. But his emphatic recommendations in each petition are : 1st, the absolute prohibition of hunting Herons and Ibises from June 1st to January 31st ; 2nd, the recommendation of nesting-places on private property to the especial protection of the owners, and the rendering of those on public land inviolable ; 3rd, the laying of prohibitive duties on the feathers, both on those exported from Pará and on those in transit.

## A Campaign à outrance.

A further measure commended in the same memorial is this : "A vigorous propagandism against the use of plumes in the importing countries." And Professor Goeldi adds :

"For a long time I have been preparing to wage a campaign à *outrance* in this respect. I know that in regard to the United States of America I can rely on the support of scientific institutions and of the Press to combat a fashion

that is so shocking ; and, with regard to European countries, there are not lacking excellent elements that will most cordially second my efforts."

Since propagandism has proved insufficient, there must now be added to Dr. Goeldi's admonitions, the definite prohibition of the importation of these feathers.

### In the Argentine.

With regard to Argentina, the Hon. Sec. of the Sociedad Argentina Protectora de los Animales writes from Buenos Aires, March 10th, 1909 :

"I wish to state most emphatically that the reports circulated are not true as regards the Argentine Republic. The shooting of birds is prohibited here from 1st September to 31st March, but notwithstanding this, the wholesale destruction of Herons goes on, and the fact that during the breeding season over six thousand kilogrammes of these feathers were exported is sufficient evidence of the wholesale destruction of these birds. . . . In this country there are no ' farms,' nor do I believe that any exist under the conditions mentioned anywhere else."

This testimony is confirmed by the President of the Society, Dr. Albacarrin, who says :

"I beg to state that the data in regard to the Argentine Republic supplied by Mr. Laglaize are incorrect.

"Notwithstanding the decree of the 19th September, 1899, regulating hunting and absolutely prohibiting the shooting of birds useful to agriculture, these are killed in great quantities, without respect to the period of nesting and hatching. On the contrary, precisely during the period of nesting of the White Heron, for example, is the time that that bird is most sought and killed in order to obtain the feathers."

H.M.B. Vice Consul at Cordoba (Argentina) writes, 6th February, 1909 :

"Dr. Albacarrin's view confirms my impression with regard to the report circulated by Mr. Laglaize, and the

contents of his letter fully coincide with what I have always understood was and is the custom in Argentine territories of killing these birds (Hérons and Egrets) at nesting-time for their plumes."

Further evidence is contained in a letter, dated November 29th, 1908, from Mr. J. Quelch, B.Sc. (Lond.), formerly curator British Guiana Museum, Adviser to the Government for the granting of licences to kill Wild Birds, and examiner of all collections thus made, late C.M.Z.S., South America :

"My experience, directly as an eye-witness, of the conditions under which osprey plumes are obtained in Tropical America for export, is so different from that of Mr. Laglaize, that it is difficult to know what to think of his statements.

"During a residence of seventeen years in British Guiana, and with an experience of travel ranging from the Eastern Orinoco to the borders of Surinam, and inland to Brazil and Venezuela, along the eastern upper waters of the Amazon and the Orinoco, I have never known nor heard of any such method of collection as that described by Mr. Laglaize.

### Demerara.

"Until the Government in Demerara put into force the stringent provisions of the Wild Birds Ordinance, a brisk trade was carried on by many people in the export of bird-skins, and largely of osprey plumes. These feathers were obtained by killing the Egrets in the breeding season, and cutting off the skin of the back on which the plumes were borne. These sections, in fact, are those sold in the trade at home, and they are so scarce just at present as to be worth as much as from 3s. 10d. to 4s. each.

"There can be little or no doubt that all prized osprey plumes are thus obtained, whether the birds are shot with a gun, or with the much more effective small poisoner arrows of the natives, by which the remaining members of the heronry are not scared away by noise ; for even if shed or fallen plumes are really collected from the nests, or from the ground or water beneath the heronry, since these birds

always breed in the swamps where the water is either dirty or strongly coloured with vegetable matter, the feathers—even if undamaged—are likely to be so soiled and discoloured as to be only fit for inferior purposes, or for dyeing.

“Certainly after the Government in Demerara had enforced the Ordinance for the Protection of Wild Birds, forbidding their slaughter under a penalty of 24 dollars for each bird or part of a bird, no trader has found it worth his while to collect plumes in the harmless manner described by Mr. Laglaize, even in the various convenient localities where large heronries were situated.”

### “ A Worthless Contention.”

Letter received by Mr. Albert Pam from Dr. Haggmann, for many years junior curator of the Parà Museum, dated May 24th, 1908 :

“It is a worthless contention on the part of importers that the Egrets are not killed for the purpose of obtaining the feathers. An absolute proof of this is the fact that the Egrets in China, which are closely related to the South American kind, have been almost entirely exterminated.”

On June 23rd, 1908, he wrote :—“ As I told you in my letter of the 24th May, the Egrets are shot in Brazil, and in the whole of the rest of South America, for obtaining their feathers. In most cases, the men who shoot these birds are the collectors of rubber and other products, who look upon the collection of osprey plumes as a lucrative secondary branch of their collecting business. We can state, without fear of contradiction, that practically all the Egrets are killed, that is to say shot, in order to obtain their feathers, because only in this manner can the feathers of the adult birds, which are the most valuable, be obtained. There can, therefore, be no doubt that the birds are being more than decimated, and will soon be exterminated. It would, therefore, be a greatly desirable achievement if the English Parliament could take steps to prevent the slaughter in such huge quantities of these Egrets.”

### “No Cast Plumes.”

Letter from Mr. H. E. Dresser (author of “The Birds of Europe”) commenting, on November 16th, 1908, on the letter from Mr. Laglaize :

“All I can say is, that I do not believe the statements in it. When in America many years ago I visited large breeding colonies of Egrets, where at least 500 to 1,000 pairs were breeding, and certainly when the young were hatched I could not have picked up any cast plumes, and I do not believe that the birds moult till after they have left their breeding haunts. Not very long ago, I visited a breeding colony of about 200 pairs of Lesser Egrets in the Herzegovina, in company with Mr. Othmar Reiser, the chief of the Museum at Sarajevo, and we certainly found no cast plumes.”

To this Mr. Dresser adds (March 17, 1911) :

“I have visited many nesting-places and have never picked up or seen plumes on the ground or in the lining of nests.”

Professor Goeldi writes (March 26, 1911) :

“The tremendous disorder and dirt on the ground all over the area where there is a colony of Heron-nests defies description, and the idea that osprey-feathers could be picked up there in a proper condition can only be set forth by somebody who never made a step in such a locality.”

### “Shot at their Nests.”

Letter from Mr. Eagle Clarke, Director of the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, October 18th, 1899 :

“On the Lower Danube I witnessed the wholesale destruction of Egrets and Herons and Ibises for the sake of their plumes. This was accomplished by a party of plume-hunters from Vienna, who, in one morning, shot 2,000 of these beautiful birds *at their nests*. I saw it done, and I visited the camp of the hunters, and saw all the poor birds laid out, and the men busily engaged stripping off their dorsal plumes—Ospreys, Egrets, or Aigrettes.”

## CHAPTER THE THIRD.

## THE HERONS AND EGRETS OF FLORIDA.

The statements of the trade with regard to Florida and its Egrets are as follows :

"It is, no doubt, true that the Egret at one time existed in very large numbers in Florida. The birds exist still in numerous swamps known as the Everglades, but there has never been any supply of importance from those parts. . . . American commercial development is entirely responsible for the disappearance of the White Heron from its old-time haunts ; the feather-trade is not."—"The Feather Trade," pp. 40, 102.

"They were not exterminated ; they migrated. You might just as well say that because you do not see foxes on Hampstead Heath, foxes are exterminated."—Mr. Downham, before the House of Lords Committee, 1908.

"The Egret . . . thrives to-day in the remote Everglades of Florida and in Southern States. . . . Naturally enough these Egrets are not to be encountered in the beaten paths of the United States tourist."—"The Feather Trade," p. 14.

"There never were many Egrets in Florida. You can soon exterminate a small number of birds in a small part of the country. If there were Egrets in the Isle of Wight they would soon be exterminated."—Mr. G. K. Dunstall, before the H.L. Committee.

"The tale about the birds being shot at breeding time is a fairy myth." Mr. Weiler, before the H.L. Committee.

The testimony of ornithologists with many years' experience of the place and conditions of which they write, is as follows. It has been published on the Continent, and in the State where these things have happened ; and it has never been refuted :

**Extracts from the Journal of the late Mr. W. E. D. Scott, member of the American Ornithologists' Union, published in the "Auk" (the organ of the A.O.U.) in 1887 :**

(A summary of Mr. Scott's papers was read by Professor Newton at the annual meeting of the Society for the Protection of Birds, in 1893, and published by the Society (Leaflet No. 7).

"4th May, 1887.—Charlotte Harbour. Only a few ye ago bird-life so abundant that it would be difficult to ex gerate the numbers. Captain Baker said that about si

acres were so covered with White Ibis that 'it looked from a distance as if a big white sheet had been thrown over the mangroves.' Sailing to-day over forty miles, I did not see a place that was occupied by even a few birds. Postmaster and others all agreed that for the past two years birds had been so persecuted to get their 'plumes' for the northern market, that they were practically exterminated. Birds were killed, plumes taken from the back, head, and breast, and carcase thrown to 'Buzzards' (*i.e.* Vultures)."

"8th May.—Macleod Island, great breeding-place of Reddish Egret. 'Found a huge pile of half-decayed birds, lying on the ground, which had been killed a day or two. All of them had the 'plumes' taken, with a patch of skin from the back, and some had the wings cut off. I counted over 200 birds so treated. Within the last few days it had been almost destroyed, hundreds of old birds having been killed, and thousands of eggs broken. I do not know of a more horrible and brutal exhibition than that which I witnessed here. . . ."

"12th May.—"We found in camp Mr. Frank Johnson, who is a professional 'bird-plumer.' Snowy Heron, American Egret, and Reddish Egret brought the highest prices, but he killed almost anything that wore feathers. He said he wished there was some law to protect the birds, at least during the breeding-time, but added that as everybody else was 'pluming' he had made up his mind that he might have his share. He was killing birds and making plumes now for Mr. J. H. Batty, of New York City, who employed many men along the entire Gulf Coast from Cedar Keys to Key West, particularly for Herons, Spoonbills, and showy birds. He told me of the enormous breeding places that had formerly been the homes of the birds of this region. Now most of them were entirely deserted, and the number still resorted to yearly becoming smaller. 'It was easy to find thousands of birds five or six years back, where absolutely none now existed.' My own observation leads me to agree with this statement, *but in fact the destruction must have been greater than can be realized.*"

"27th May.—Mr. Frank Higel told me the same story of extermination I had already heard so many times—two large

'rookeries' of Herons, where we were now anchored, but broken up by plume-hunters, and it was impossible to find any breeding or roosting in this vicinity."

"29th May.—Saratosa—All birds killed off by plume-hunters."

"It is scarcely necessary to draw any conclusions or inferences. This great and growing evil speaks for itself. I have the names and addresses of some fifty dealers in various towns in Florida and the principal cities of the country. Merchants in New York and other centres are buying every month the skins and plumes of Florida birds.

he price paid for such material, notwithstanding the efforts made to create sympathy for the birds, and a feeling against using the feathers for hats and other decorative purposes, is each year becoming higher, showing how great is the demand and how profitable the traffic to these men-milliners."

From a paper read by Mr. Gilbert Pearson, member of the American Ornithologists' Union, at the World's Congress on Ornithology, at Chicago, in 1897:

"I visited a large colony of Herons on Horse Hummock (Central Florida), on April 27th, 1888. Several hundred pairs were nesting there at the time. . . . Three years later I again visited the heronry, but the scene had changed. Not a Heron was visible. The call had come from northern cities for greater quantities of Heron plumes for millinery. The plume-hunter had discovered the colony, and a few shattered nests were all that was left to tell of the once populous colony. The few surviving tenants, if there were any, had fled in terror to the recesses of wilder swamps. A few miles north of Waldo, in the flat pine region, our party came one day upon a little swamp where we had been told Herons bred in numbers. Upon approaching the place the screams of young birds reached our ears. The cause of this soon became apparent by the buzzing of green-flies and the heaps of dead Herons festering in the sun, with the back of each bird raw and bleeding. . . . Young Herons had been left by scores in the nests to perish from exposure and starvation."

From "Wild Wings," by H. K. Job, member of the American Ornithologists' Union, State Ornithologist of Connecticut (Constable & Co., 1905):

"What a spectacle; the dark-green mangrove foliage dotted with Ibises of dazzling whiteness, "Pink Curlews" (the local name for the Roseate Spoonbill), and blue-tinted Herons. Where ever I may penetrate in future wanderings, I can never hope to see anything to surpass, or in some respects to equal, that upon which I now gazed. Years ago such sights could be found all over Florida and other Southern States. This is the last pitiful remnant of hosts of innocent exquisite creatures slaughtered for a brutal, senseless, yes, criminal millinery folly. . . Such inaccessible tangles of southern Florida are the last places of refuge, the last ditch in the struggle for existence to which these splendid species have been driven." (P. 54.)

From the same work :

"I revelled in the sights and sounds of this wonderful place, which is probably the largest, and perhaps the only large, Egret rookery in North America. The only reason that it exists to-day is because it is guarded by armed wardens who will arrest or, if necessary, shoot any person found upon the property with a gun. . .

"That the work of destruction is going on with rapidity, one cannot fail to realize who has been to Florida. Three years ago, these beautiful and spectacular species were to be seen nearly everywhere. In 1903 I had hard work to find a few scattered colonies in the remotest and wildest parts of the State. Mr. F. M. Chapman went there last season and found them all practically annihilated. The same is becoming true even in southern Brazil." (Pp. 143-145.)

From "Bird-Lore," 1908.

"Until a few years ago, thousands of Snowy Herons made this (Lake Malheur) their summer home, but we saw only one bird. The plume-hunters are responsible for the disappearance of this beautiful species; they killed in the summer of 1886 enough birds to produce \$8,000 worth of

plumes. The slaughter was continued in 1887, 1888 and 1889." (Lake Malheur was made a State Reservation in 1908 on account of the extensive killing of Grebes, Egrets and Terns for their plumage.)

**Mr. F. M. Chapman, Curator of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, member of the A.O.U., in "Bird-Lore," 1908 :**

"My experiences have been with the larger Egret. Always when a rookery of promising size was reported, the plume-hunters arrived first, and word came that the 'long whites have all been shot out.'

"The State, learning the value of the treasure of which she has been robbed, has passed stringent laws prohibiting the killing of Egrets. So, too, she has passed laws against pickpockets, but just so long as there are pockets worth picking there will be some one to pick them, and just so long as Egrets' plumes are worth their weight in gold there will be someone to supply them until the last plume has found its way from the bonnet to the ash-barrel."

**From "Bird-Lore," 1909 :**

"During the summer of 1908 two small colonies of Snowy Egrets were discovered on the South Carolina coast and every effort was made to give them complete protection. Notwithstanding all that was done, both of these rookeries were 'shot out' quite recently."

**Mr. J. A. Dimock, in "Bird-Lore," 1909 :**

"Within my own recollection the trees on the banks of the bays and rivers of the Florida peninsula were alive with birds of many varieties. As night approached the air was filled with birds on their way to their homes in the big rookeries. Often the foliage of a key was hidden by the mass of birds, and the island made to look like a huge snow-drift. The small remnant has retreated to the fastnesses of the Big Cypress Swamp and the unexplored Everglades; but even here the hunters are following. . . Every allegation to the contrary notwithstanding, the aigrette of commerce is obtained only by shooting parent-birds at the nesting season." (See also pp. 8, 22.)

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

## "THE STORY OF THE EGRET."

The spokesman of the plume-trade brings two direct accusations, equally unwarranted and equally incorrect, against the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. One is concerned with Australia, the other with India. A series of photographs showing "The Story of the Egret" was sent to the Society by Mr. A. H. Mattingley, Hon. Sec. of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union. The photographs had been exhibited with useful results in the large towns of Australia, and it was hoped that this pictorial representation of facts might have as great an effect in England. The hope has been to a large extent realized, the photographs, and the lantern slides made from them, having attracted much attention.

"The Feather Trade" says:

"The photographs referred to and issued by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds have nothing whatever to do with the collection of plumes for trade purposes. They were obtained in Australia, where there is not, and never has been, any collection of Egret feathers for trade purposes."—p. 27.

"... The photographs, to which the term 'bogus' might reasonably be applied."—p. 28.

This is the account given by Mr. Mattingley in the "Emu," the official organ of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union, 1908. So far as is known, no one in Australia has contradicted it:

"... Paddling through the timber we were able to ascertain the extent of the heronry of White Egrets, and computed their number to be about 150, the remnant of a once larger colony, which, we were informed, must have totalled originally about 300 birds, but which, owing to the demand for their back plumes for ladies' hats, had been decimated by plume-hunters. The only method by which the hunters are able to obtain Egrets' plumes in quantities is to shoot the birds on their nests, since at this period they are more readily approached, and allow a person to get within

gunshot. . . . I determined to revisit the locality during my Christmas holidays. . . . There, strewn on the floating water-weed and also on adjacent logs, were at least fifty carcasses of large White and smaller Plumed Egrets—nearly one-third of the rookery, perhaps more—the birds having been shot off their nests containing young.”

Colonel Ryan, President of the Australasian Ornithologists' Union, gave the following evidence before the House of Lords Committee, 1908 :

“ I can give you a very good example of what came under my own personal notice about four years ago, of a rookery where two young men went down and destroyed, and I think they sold over 400 plumes. The destruction of 400 birds meant, of course, the destruction of four times that number, because they were all breeding at the time. The Ornithological Union in Australia has done everything it possibly could to bring these facts under the various State Governments ; and last year I knew of another rookery in New South Wales, where some brigands went down and destroyed, I think, about fifty birds. We sent a photographer up, who got a very interesting series of photographs taken. We had these photographs reproduced in as many papers as we could throughout Australia, for the purpose of drawing the attention of the public to the manner in which this destruction was going on.”

Whether or not Egret plumes from Australia come, directly or indirectly, into the London market seems to be of small consequence, and does not affect the character of the trade allegations. The photographs were taken after a plume-hunters' raid, and evidence shows that plume-hunters' methods are much the same the world over.

## CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

### EXPORTATION FROM INDIA.

Mr. Downham says that the action of the Society for the Protection of Birds in "obtaining" the Notification issued by the Government of India in 1902, "can hardly be criticized too severely," and adds that "no greater act of 'smuggling' in connexion with this trade has ever been perpetrated than in obtaining the issue of the Notification prohibiting the export of plumage and bird-skins."

#### Bird Protection in India.

The facts are these: The question of the protection of wild birds in India, irrespective of the game question, was opened by a letter addressed to the Government of Madras by Surgeon-General Bidie, C.I.E., F.Z.S., in 1881. He brought to notice the indiscriminate slaughter of birds, for the sake of their plumage, which was taking place throughout the Madras Presidency, and claimed protection for these helpless creatures mainly in the interests of agriculture.

The Government of Madras, in forwarding this letter to the Government of India, remarked that they were alive to the necessity of the adoption, in the interests of agriculture, of some vigorous measures to control the destruction of birds, which appeared to be going on throughout India, and they, therefore, deemed the matter worthy of consideration with a view to a general Act being passed. In 1884 the East India Association of London passed a resolution declaring it very advisable that some regulations should be framed and put in force for protecting the wild birds of India. In 1887 a Wild Birds Protection Act was passed, which, though insufficient, was regarded as the forerunner of a more complete measure. It empowered Local Governments to make rules prohibiting the possession or sale during its breeding season of any kind of wild bird recently killed

or taken, and also the importation of the plumage of any kind of wild bird during such season ; the term " wild bird " to include peacocks and game-birds. From 1887 to 1900 the Government received many representations and appeals from various societies, and from both Indian and European officials as well as from private individuals, on the subject of bird protection. In consequence, on August 31st, 1900, a circular was issued from Simla to all Local Governments and Administrations, inviting their attention to the Act of 1887, and asking for their views as to the sufficiency of the measures in force to prevent the destruction of the birds of India.

The " Madras Mail " (March 27th and April 18th, 1900) spoke out without hesitation on the matter, supporting the proposal for a general prohibition of the export of bird-skins :

" The dealers at Indian ports, and certain merchants and brokers in Europe or elsewhere, might indulge in vituperative language, but as, with the market peremptorily and permanently closed, the demand for skins would cease, there would be no inducement to supply skins, or no temptation to slay birds wholesale. The cutting off of the supply from India might compel the fair votaries of fashion at a distance to pay more for the gratification of their taste for feathers than they now do. But India need not indulge in any sympathy on their account. What she has great occasion to do is to prevent a state of things that causes a deplorable sacrifice of human food, and the materials for human raiment, besides inflicting penury on individuals, and great loss on the State. . . The ruthless destruction of insectivorous birds with gay plumage causes such waste, since it deprives growing food-crops of the protection afforded by a watchful and efficient bird-police against multitudinous insect thieves."

The issue of the Notification (Customs Circular No. 13 of 1902) was the result of the Government enquiry.

Mr. Downham's grievance evidently is that the men whose depredations the Notification was designed to stop, were not asked to be consenting parties to the action agreed upon by a responsible Government after full investigation.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

## SMUGGLING.

The writer of "The Feather Trade" asserts :

"I can assure you, most solemnly, that the trade has no agents who are known or encouraged to poach upon preserves or reservations. That such poaching goes on is undoubted. Men who are working in the virgin lands where wild birds are plentiful will kill what they can, where they can, and when they can, and they will make the best use they can of the plumages, whether there is or is not a market."

If there were no market for plumages, what would be "the best use" of them? It is not within common experience that the existence of receivers is unconnected with the business of thief. Whether or not the trade directly control the invasion of preserves and the breaking of export laws, it is certain that they receive the goods so obtained, and receive them under such conditions that they cannot even allege ignorance.

In 1902 the Government of India made the export of skins and plumes from India illegal. Naturalists and others interested in the matter saw with surprise that in spite of this prohibition the feathers of birds peculiar to the East Indies, and of others strongly suspected to come from thence, continued to be offered for sale in Mincing Lane.

### How Bird-Feathers Come from India.

The explanation of this was furnished by the Board of Customs to the House of Lords Committee in 1908. It then appeared that between December 20th, 1907, and February 15th, 1908, twenty-three cases of dead bird-skins from India were imported as cowhair or horsehair; that in March, 6,400 further skins were imported hidden under a layer of horsehair, and described as horsehair; that "osprey" feathers from India were sent by parcel post, declared as dress material; that smuggling was also carried on by way of the Straits Settlement, in order to evade examination by the Customs officers.

It does not appear that the trade at this end refused to receive, to sell, or to make their profit on these smuggled goods. At the

sales in February and April of that year there were large supplies of Egret feathers, Impeyan Pheasants, Parrots, Kingfishers, Ringnecks, and other birds from India. There were further offers of East Indian birds at the sales in 1909.

Birds also come from our Colonies in spite of Colonial laws prohibiting the killing or the export of those very species.

“The Feather Trade” paragraph might more suitably read :

“That poaching and smuggling go on is undoubted. Plume-hunters and plume-traders will kill what they can, where they can, and when they can, and will make all the profit they can, so long as there is a market.”

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

## THE BIRD-OF-PARADISE.

BY MR. WALTER GOODFELLOW, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

SINCE returning from Dutch New Guinea in February (1911), my attention has been called to a paper by Mr. A. E. Pratt, published by the feather-trade, defending the slaughter of Paradise Birds for millinery purposes. As Mr. Pratt has made several journeys to New Guinea, I am surprised that he should state that these birds "are in no danger of either extermination or serious reduction," and I can only think either that, being an entomologist and not an ornithologist, he has paid no serious attention to the matter, or else that he has personal reasons for defending the trade.

My experience has been very different. Since 1903 I have been almost constantly in one part or another of New Guinea and the adjacent islands, and from the first time I set foot in the country I have been aghast at the wholesale slaughter of these wonderful birds, and, when re-visiting the same localities later, at their complete extermination or greatly diminished numbers. I could quote districts *not* "in the immediate neighbourhood of towns and trading stations" where their call is now never heard; but there seems no reason why they should not live even in the vicinity of man. In British New Guinea I have seen several nests of the *raggiana* in coffee-bushes close to the house of an English planter.

In considering the danger of extermination, it is necessary to remember that no family of birds is so local. Some species are confined to comparatively small areas or to a single range of mountains, or even to a single side of the mountains; others to quite small islands or small groups of islands, as in the case

of the Greater Bird of the Aru Islands. Indeed, I can think of only two species which are found in Dutch, German, and British New Guinea—the King Bird and the Rifle Bird. The first is a lowland form, and the latter does not ascend beyond 3,000 feet at the most. The magnificent *Diphyllodes magnifica* is not “distributed over the whole of New Guinea,” as Mr. Pratt supposes, but is confined to the N.W. parts. All the other forms of the bird are different local species. The danger of extermination of species is obviously greater the smaller their range.

Without discussing such rare species as Rothschild’s Paradise Bird, let us take the case of the more ordinary ones, such as the *apoda*, *minor*, *rubra*, and *raggiana*. It has been stated that as many skins come to the market as formerly, and that this proves the species is not diminishing. It proves nothing of the kind. It simply means that though they have been wiped out in some districts, the shooters have penetrated further in order to get them. This supply may go on for a time, but it cannot go on for long. The Dutch line of steamers running along the north and west coasts now call at places which were unknown a few years ago, and in addition, the Chinese, Malay, and Arab traders run schooners of their own, to pick up the skins at still more out-of-the-way places. Over and over again both shooters and traders themselves have told me, how much more difficult the collecting of skins becomes, on account of the birds having been killed-off in the more accessible regions.

Paradise skins may have been brought to England as long ago as the sixteenth century, but the craze for them is comparatively modern; and modern also is the present method of slaughter. Formerly the birds were irregularly killed by the natives with bows and arrows. Now, the slaughter is systematic. Professional shooters, chiefly Malays from the Celebes and the various Moluccan Islands, flock over to New Guinea, armed with shot guns, and scour the districts far and wide, each year being obliged to go further afield to obtain the supply.

Five years ago I spent six months in the Humboldt's Bay district, and quite thirty such shooters were there then, some of whom remained all the year through. Each of these shooters had several natives in his employ, and they would be away in the bush probably three months at a stretch. As the boats call there every month the skins are sent away as quickly as possible, for the agents would not (as Mr. Pratt leads us to suppose) be such fools as to keep these where they quickly deteriorate; neither would they send to Humboldt's Bay skins collected outside the radius of that port of call.

The collecting area, moreover, is not so large as Mr. Pratt tries to make the public believe. It is true that "one may sail for forty days among the islands," but not along the Dutch New Guinea coast, and that is where the birds come from. Mr. Pratt speaks of the enormous areas of unexplored land between Kapia and the Princesse Marianne Strait. It is from this part of the country I have just returned, and it may well remain unexploited so far as Paradise Birds are concerned, because it would never pay the shooters to go there. It is out of the region of *Paradisaea minor*, which is certainly not "found on all the Dutch New Guinea coast," as Mr. Pratt states. Its place is here taken by the *P. novae-guinae*, a far rarer bird, and hitherto not even represented in the British Museum collection. Further south, on the enormous flat regions around Merauke, no Paradise Birds are found at all; so that even in New Guinea there are vast districts unsuited for them.

I have never seen or heard any species of the genus Paradise so high up as 4,500 feet. My experience has been that about 3,000 feet is quite their highest limit.

About four years ago I obtained from the Collector of Customs at Dobo in the Arus, the number of skins of the Greater Bird (*P. apoda*) exported from there the previous year. It amounted roughly to about 1,100. By an arrangement with the traders there, a firm in Makassar now takes the whole of the season's output. When I was staying at Makassar last November I asked

the buyer of this firm how many *apodas* they had received last year, and he said between three and four hundred. This does not mean that the birds have been less shot than formerly, for they were never so much sought after as they have been in the last few years. It means that the birds are getting scarcer.

On previous occasions in Dobo I have seen both females and young males among the skins. A Chinese trader in Weigiou, through whose hands most of the *rubras* pass, once told me that there was a demand for immature birds of that species, as the heads and throats are so beautiful; and he had a great number of them among his skins which I looked through. Therefore, I am unable to agree with Mr. Pratt that "the birds will thrive because the conditions under which they are killed preserve both the females and the young males." It has been supposed that the males attain their full plumage when four years old, and therefore have probably nested for two or three seasons before then. This is all supposition, and latterly I have had reason for doubting it; having examined several specimens which, according to their phase of plumage, were at least two years old, but which showed no signs of being in a breeding condition. As a matter of fact, with the exception of the *raggiana*, the Blue Bird, and the Rifle Bird, we know nothing of the nesting-habits of the Paradise Birds. As these lay only one egg at a time, or at most two, they cannot reproduce very rapidly.

I have sometimes been told that Paradise plumes are sure to go out of fashion for a time, and this will give the birds a period of rest in which to increase. I am sorry to say we cannot delude ourselves that this will be so. When the price of the skins is low over here, the houses in Ternate, Bonda, and Makassar are every bit as energetic in obtaining the skins, which they keep back until fashion turns again. At these times they have the excuse of low prices to pay the shooters less, and as the latter are always kept in their employers' debt, they are forced to go out as usual.

*Paradisea jobiensis* (not "paradisornis") may only be an island form of *P. minor*, but it is far more beautiful, having the

[*With the Hon. Secretary's Compliments.*]

"Feathers and Facts" is the latest and most comprehensive statement issued by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on the subject of the trade in the plumage of wild birds. It supplies, in the first place, a brief history of the growth of the trade and of the corresponding growth of expostulation and condemnation, on the part of ornithologists and other naturalists, from the time when Professor Newton first expressed in the "Times" his horror on perusing a catalogue of a London feather sale, and the Journal of the American Ornithologists' Union described the slaughter going on in Florida, down to the days of the Indian ordinance against the exportation of bird skins and the adoption by the House of Lords of a Bill to prohibit the importation of wild birds' plumage into Great Britain. The main purpose of the pamphlet is, however, to disprove various statements made by the trade in their own defence. One of the earliest and most successful allegations regarding the "osprey," consisted in the well-known story that the plumes were "artificial," and not composed of feathers at all. This forms a curious chapter in trade history. "Thousands of women have been deceived into buying egret feathers by the false assertion that they were not egret feathers, and even now the fable lingers in provincial shops. From the first day when milliners were instructed to sell their ospreys as 'artificial,' if they could not sell them as 'real,' to the day when a trade witness before the House of Lords Committee clung to the expiring fraud, but could not produce one specimen of the article for examination, no 'artificial osprey' was ever placed in an ornithologist's hand." Such a manufacture, it is pointed out, would by no means serve the purposes of the traders in plumage, whose aim is naturally to sell their own wares. The place of the so-called artificial osprey has been taken by the plume that is said to be made of moulted feathers "picked up" by the hunters. The Society's pamphlet points out that this theory, as set forth by the trade, rests on the statements of two French travellers, neither of them an ornithologist, neither of them wholly unconnected with the trade, and that their assertions are discredited by the evidence of the British Minister in Venezuela, the President and Hon. Secretary of the Argentina Society for the Protection of Animals, Professor Goeldi, author of "The Birds of Brazil," and director of the Para Museum of Natural History, Mr. J. Quelch, B.Sc., formerly curator of the British Guiana Museum, and by recent travellers who have an intimate knowledge of the country in which the birds nest and of the manner in which the feathers are obtained. It is also pointed out that while the trade allege that "the shooting of an egret is now an indictable offence in Venezuela," and declare

[With the Hon. Secretary's Compliments.]

"The Hon. Secretary's Compliments" is the title of a  
comparative statement issued in the year  
1860 by the Secretary of the Board of  
Education in the State of New York.  
It is a report on the progress of the  
education of the people in the State  
of New York, and is a valuable  
document in the history of the  
education of the people in the  
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valuable document in the history  
of the education of the people  
in the State of New York.



Contract, the one law they can quote as a recent decree of one small sub-state; while the condition of the countries concerned, no less than the character of the jungle and swamp where the birds breed, entirely prohibits the possibility of any such law being enforced, even if it existed.

Egret or "osprey" feathers form but a fraction of the whole trade. Other chapters in "Feathers and Facts" deal with the destruction of rare species, and of species which are thereby reduced to rarity. The recklessness with which the destruction goes on is illustrated by the offer at a sale in the present year of over twenty thousand humming-birds, though these birds are said by the trade to have been unsaleable for twenty years and by the fact, divulged by the trade, that birds which are not in demand are brought into the market in the hope that the demand may be created. The word "Game-birds" is shown to cover such valuable species as Goura pigeons, Himalayan pheasants, and the like, while the "quill" has to answer for the slaughter of rheas, pelicans, jabru storks, and cranes. A contribution by Mr. Walter Goodfellow, the well-known explorer and traveller in New Guinea, effectually disposes of the trade assertion that Birds-of-Paradise are in no danger from plume hunters; he describes their systematic slaughter, the weakness of protective laws, and the diminished numbers or extermination of species, together with the introduction of opium, strong drink, and disease by the Chinese hunters employed to obtain the skins.

On the question of British trade and labour, the pamphlet shows that at present the feather trade is in foreign hands; its chief spokesman, when examined before the House of Lords Committee, admitted that the loss of it might not make much difference one way or another in the British labour market, the work on fancy feathers being only a seasonal trade with young women engaged at other times on ostrich feathers and artificial flowers, while it, of course, gives much less employment than is required in the production of manufactured articles such as flowers and ribbon. Already other countries have shown a disposition to follow if England will lead the way by prohibiting the importation of bird feathers. If the Importation Act would not save the birds, the traders, it is urged, might be trusted not to trouble themselves greatly about it. "That they are fighting with might and main, and with every argument on which they can lay hands, is proof that they are desperately afraid of the effect on the whole continent, and on America, of such a law passing through the British Parliament." An International Committee, to consider the means for obtaining international laws, was appointed at the Berlin Ornithological Conference last summer. In any case the British law would be of material use to our Colonies who are striving to protect their birds, and would assist in checking the smuggling which is now carried on.

longest plumes of all the long-plumed species ; and for this reason, coupled with the high prices paid for it, has been more sought after, so that now very few are taken. This is the ground for Mr. Pratt's remark that there is "so little trade in this bird." The regions around Ansols and Jobi Island having been depleted a few years back the steamers commenced to call at two new ports, Wooi and Pom, and most of the traders removed to those places. Mr. Pratt seems to think that all the mountain species at any rate are free from danger of extermination. Before the shooting was closed in the British territory, no mountains were too inaccessible for the shooters. I myself have met men coming back from the high parts of the Owen Stanley range, ten and twelve days' journey inland, whose catch has been composed almost solely of Meyer's Sickle Bill, the Princess Stephanie, Lawes, and the Prince Rudolph or Blue Bird—the very ones whose "inaccessible" homes Mr. Pratt considers sufficient protection. I know for a fact that immature Blue Birds have been offered for sale at the Sale-rooms in London. Two years ago I visited the native haunts of this species, in order to try to get a few living specimens. After many weeks' search, two only were discovered. Everywhere I met with the same answer from the natives : "Ah So-and-so's boys were here, and they killed them all off." The late Mr. Stalker found the same thing in the Mount Kebia district, the part which Mr. Pratt quotes. I may point out that Lawes Bird of Paradise is not found in Dutch New Guinea at all, but is confined solely to parts of the British division. Guns are not at all necessary to capture any of the Six-Plumed species, as they are probably the most easily snared of all birds by the natives. Three years ago there was a sudden demand for the metallic breast-patch of this species, and great numbers were caught.

Too much reliance cannot be placed upon the supposed protection existing in British Papua. The law requires to be much more vigorously enforced. This is proved by the fact that *raggiana* skins still come to the Sale-rooms, though this species does not exist outside the British parts.

With regard to Dutch New Guinea, in December, 1909, when I was going out with the British Ornithological Expedition to the west coast of New Guinea, I heard that the Dutch were going to stop the shooting not only of Paradise Birds, but of other species; but such a hue and cry was raised by the traders in some of the Maluccas, who said they could not pay their taxes if the shooting were stopped, that the Government had not strength to withstand their demands. The shooting is now closed for six months in the year on the north coast, and for six months on the west coast; but these two seasons coincide with the time when the Paradise Birds are out of plumage, so that the business goes on just the same, and the arrangement suits the traders very well.

I have said that the hunters are penetrating into the less accessible regions to get skins. This opening up of the country is not altogether beneficial to the natives, for the traders are not the most desirable or scrupulous of men in their dealings, and in many districts they have introduced spirits and opium as an exchange for skins, with degrading results. To see this, it is only necessary to go to the Maclure Gulf, Sorong, or the Aru Islands. I will not touch upon diseases which the Chinese have chiefly been the means of introducing, although much might be said about this too.

In conclusion I may say that I fully agree with Mr. Pratt's remark as to the urgent need of protection for the Crowned Pigeons, but the slaughter of the Paradise Birds is responsible, in a great measure, for the rapid extermination of these birds also. Owing to the shooters having to go so far afield for the former they kill off the Pigeons which might otherwise find sanctuary in those parts; the Pigeons alone would not have tempted the shooters to penetrate so far.

### **Mr. Downham and Dutch New Guinea.**

In connexion with the destruction of Paradise Birds in Dutch New Guinea, the following two statements made by Mr. Downham may be compared: the one contradicting and ridiculing the other.

### **Mr. Downham before the House of Lords Committee, June 24th, 1908 :**

“ The shooting of Birds-of-Paradise is controlled, to a very large extent, by the Government of Dutch New Guinea. . . The Dutch Government very recently offered to sell to one firm the whole of the shooting rights of Dutch New Guinea, but they asked such a price for it that it would be impossible to accept their terms, unless they could be sure of killing every bird.”

### **Mr. Downham, in “ The Feather Trade,” p. 44 :**

“ The freedom with which ridiculous or misleading statements are bandied about may be gauged from some of recent date. In a lecture before the Selborne Society it was stated that ‘ the Dutch Government had offered to one firm of feather merchants the right to kill all the Birds-of-Paradise in Dutch New Guinea.’ The Dutch Government promptly denied the absurd statement.”

## APPENDIX.

## IMPORTATION OF PLUMAGE PROHIBITION BILL, 1908.

The following are the principal clauses of the "Bill to Prohibit the Importation of the Plumage and Skins of Wild Birds," which was passed by the House of Lords on July 21st, and read a first time in the House of Commons on July 22nd, 1908 :—

1. Any person who, after the commencement of this Act, shall have in his possession for the purpose of sale or exchange the plumage, skin, or body, or any part of the plumage, skin, or body, of any dead wild bird imported or brought into the United Kingdom on or after the first day of January, 1909, which is not included in the schedule to this Act, or otherwise exempted from the operation of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence, and shall on summary conviction be liable for the first offence to a penalty of not exceeding five pounds, and for every subsequent offence to a penalty of not exceeding twenty-five pounds, and in every case the Court shall order the forfeiture and destruction of the articles in respect of which the offence has been committed.

2. The Privy Council may at any time, by notice published in the *London Gazette*, add to, or remove from, the schedule to this Act the name of any other foreign wild bird, and thereupon the provisions of this Act shall take effect as if such bird had been included in or removed from the schedule to this Act.

5. (1) Subject to the provision in sub-section (2) of this section nothing in this Act shall apply to—

- (A) Wild birds imported or brought into the United Kingdom for use as articles of diet ;
- (B) Anything done by virtue of a licence issued from time to time by the Board of Trade under such conditions and regulations as they may prescribe for the purpose of supplying specimens of any birds not included in the schedule to any natural history or other museum or for the purpose of scientific research ; or
- (C) The plumage, skin, or body, or any parts thereof, of any bird not included in the schedule to this Act and forming part of the wearing apparel being *bona fide* the property of and either actually in the use of or accompanying any person entering the United Kingdom ; or
- (D) The plumage of any bird not included in the schedule to this Act imported or brought into the United Kingdom for use solely in manufacture of flies for the capture of any species of fish.

## SCHEDULE.

## BIRDS EXEMPTED.

1. Ostriches.

2. Eider Ducks.

## SALE OR EXCHANGE OF PLUMAGE BILL, 1911.

The following are the principal clauses of the "Bill to Prohibit the Sale, Hire, or Exchange of the Plumage and Skins of Certain Wild Birds," which was introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Alden, and read a first time on February 22nd, 1911 :

1. (1) Any person who, after the commencement of this Act, shall have in his possession for the purpose of sale or exchange the plumage or skin, or any part of the plumage or skin, of any dead wild bird imported or brought into the United Kingdom on or after *the first day of January one thousand nine hundred and twelve*, which is included in the schedule to this Act, or not exempted from the operation of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence, and shall on summary conviction be liable for the first offence to a penalty of not exceeding *five pounds*, and for every subsequent offence to a penalty of not exceeding *twenty-five pounds*, and in every case the court shall order the forfeiture and destruction of the articles in respect of which the offence has been committed.

2. and 5. Same intention as in Bill of 1908.

### SCHEDULE.

Birds-of-Paradise.

Humming Birds.

Pheasants.

With the following exceptions :—

The Green Pheasant, the Ring-necked Pheasant, and the Common Pheasant.

Grebes.

Pittas.

Crowned Pigeons (*Gourinæ*).

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