

PAPERS RELATING TO A PROPOSED WORK ON THE BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND.

No. 1.

MEMORANDUM for the UNDER SECRETARY.

Geological Survey Office and Colonial Museum,
Wellington, 20th July, 1867.

(No. 221-67.)

MR. BULLER is engaged in preparing a work on the "Birds of New Zealand," the prospectus of which I beg to enclose.

The importance of such a work has been advocated by Gould, Newton, Sclater, and other eminent Naturalists, both in published works and private letters, who urge that a work of this description should be completed and in the hands of colonists without delay, as the Native birds are becoming rapidly extinct.

The proposed work would further have a practical utility, as the accurate information which Mr. Buller's experience will afford, respecting the habits, food, and distribution of the birds indigenous to the Colony, will be a valuable guide in the acclimatisation of imported species, on the judicious performance of which the success of this Colony as an agricultural and pastoral country will in some degree, though indirectly, depend, from its being so situated that natural agencies, unassisted by artificial means, are unable to maintain the balance between the insect pests introduced with seeds and their destructive enemies among birds.

Mr. Buller has ascertained from Professor Newton and Mr. Van Voorst of London, to whom he applied, that the publication of his work will cost at least £500, and that in common with all works on local Natural History, it may not prove a commercial success.

In order, therefore, to relieve himself from the risk of pecuniary loss, he offers to dispose of the collection of birds, upon which the descriptive portion of his work is founded, to the Colonial Museum, —which would be the most fitting place for its preservation for future reference—if the Government will contribute the sum of £300 towards the publication of his work.

I consider the offer a most advantageous one to the Colony, as the collection, which consists of over 200 specimens—a great number of which are unique—is worth considerably more intrinsically than the sum named.

I have therefore the honor to request that you will submit Mr. Buller's offer for the consideration of the Honourable the Colonial Secretary, in order that, if approved, a sum sufficient to include the above may be placed on the Estimates for "purchase of specimens for the Museum."

JAMES HECTOR.

Enclosure in No. 1.

Copy of a Letter from Mr. WALTER BULLER to the Hon. E. W. STAFFORD.

SIR,—

Wellington, 27th July, 1867.

I do myself the honor to address you on the subject of a contemplated work on the Birds of New Zealand, the prospectus of which I beg to furnish herewith.

Professor Newton, of Cambridge, has kindly undertaken to secure for me the services of one of the best Zoological artists in London, and Mr. Van Voorst, the well-known Natural History publisher, has consented to undertake the publication of the work, if proceeded with. According to an estimate furnished by the latter, the cost of producing an edition of five hundred copies will not be less than £500, while, in common with almost all other books on local Natural History, it is hardly likely to prove remunerative.

I have no wish to regard the matter in the light of a commercial speculation, but I am anxious to protect myself against absolute pecuniary loss. In order therefore to facilitate the undertaking, I have the honor to submit for your consideration the following proposal:—

Being unwilling to ask the Government for a direct grant in aid, (has as been frequently suggested to me,) I am prepared to hand over to the Colonial Museum the collection of New Zealand birds on which the descriptive portion of the work is chiefly founded—on the understanding that it shall be preserved entire for future reference—on condition of receiving from the Government the sum of £300 towards the cost of publication.

The collection is a large one, comprising over 200 specimens, and is unquestionably the best in existence.

The Hon. E. W. Stafford, Colonial Secretary.

I have, &c.,

WALTER BULLER.

Sub-Enclosure in No. 1.

(PROSPECTUS.)

The Birds of New Zealand. By Walter Buller, F.L.S.

ROYAL OCTAVO: To contain twenty-five coloured figures of New Zealand birds by a Zoological artist in London, with about six hundred pages of letter-press (in large pica).