

others, it was indeed long before those features were appreciated, and then by but few ornithologists, yet no sooner was their value recognised than it was found that nearly all of their possessors were rapidly expiring, and the destruction of the original avifauna of this important colony, so thriving and intellectual, is being attended by circumstances of extraordinary atrocity. Under the evil influence of what was some thirty years ago called "acclimatisation," not only were all sorts of birds introduced, which, being of strong species speedily established themselves with the usual effect on the weak aborigines, but, in an evil day, rabbits were liberated. These, as was anticipated by zoologists, soon became numerous beyond measure and devoured the pasture destined for the sheep, on which so much of the prosperity of the country depended. Allowing for a considerable amount of exaggeration on the part of the sheepowners, no one can doubt that the rabbit plague has inflicted a serious loss on the colony. Yet a remedy may be worse than a disease, and the so-called remedy applied in this case has been of a kind that every true naturalist knew to be most foolish, namely, the importation from England and elsewhere and liberation of divers carnivorous mammals—polecats, ferrets, stoats and weasels! Two wrongs do not make a right even at the Antipodes, and from the most authentic reports it seems, as any zoologist of common sense would have expected, that the blood-thirsty beasts make no greater impression upon the stock of rabbits in New Zealand than they do in the Mother country, while they find an easy prey in the heedless and harmless members of the aboriginal fauna, many of them incapable of flight, so that their days are assuredly numbered. Were these indigenous forms of an ordinary kind, their extirpation might be regarded with some degree of indifference; but unfortunately many of them are of extraordinary forms—the relics of perhaps the oldest fauna now living. Opportunities for learning the lesson they taught have been but scant, and they are vanishing before our eyes ere that lesson can be learnt. Assuredly the scientific naturalist of another generation, especially if he be of New Zealand birth, will brand with infamy the short-sighted folly, begotten of greed, which will have deprived him of interpreting some of the great secrets of nature, while utterly failing to put an end to the nuisance—admittedly a great one.—From Alfred Newton's Dictionary of Birds, 1896.

AMATEUR ACCLIMATISING.

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