

NATIVE BIRDS AND INTRODUCED ANIMALS.

(By CAPTAIN E. V. SANDERSON.)

All life is evolved to suit the conditions appertaining, therefore it automatically follows that when the white man first landed in this country the then existing conditions were the ideal for the prosperity of the indigenous life (plant, bird, insect, etc.). Any successful attempts in acclimatising any species of plant, animal, or insect, etc., must, in a greater or lesser degree, tend to alter the conditions which were originally present and therefore be at the expense of existing species. It is for the reason that Nature chooses, by a long process of competition, the most suitable plant and other life that the most expert foresters pin their faith and activities mainly on the indigenous to the country in which they are operating.

It was essential to the white man in order that he could follow his practice of cultivating the land that large areas of forest must be destroyed and animals introduced to pasture on the open country thus made, together with birds suitable to operate against the enemies of his crops and cultivated products in the altered conditions, as the majority of the native birds were evolved only for forest protection. Large numbers of others also existed which operated in manners as water fowl, swamp, and costal inhabitants, etc., but few were then suited to agricultural purposes.

Thus it will be seen that a definite line of demarcation must be drawn between our cultivated lands and forest and other reservations. If we require these latter to prosper, which is of course the end sought when reserving them, then no introductions even local from one locality to another, except in those cases where a species is known to have formerly existed, should be permitted, lest competition is set up to the detriment of the species of plant and bird life already present. No animals except the native rat and dog were present when the white man first entered this country, and a forest and wild life had been evolved which was not adapted to compete with animals; especially herbivorous animals. These were ignorantly introduced in our reservations, and later more ignorantly fostered, against the advice of the best informed authorities largely for the sake of sport. Their presence, in that they destroy those indigenous forests which Nature so skilfully evolved for the prevention of erosion and the formation of soil on our hills and mountains, must be detrimental to the greater part of our indigenous forest-inhabiting birds, and indeed most of the existing life on land and