

a few days after the Rock-hoppers'. The young Shags attain their plumage about the same time as the young Rock-hoppers, that is, about the beginning of April. Then they all leave the breeding-ground, and the rookery is deserted until the next season.

66. PHALACROCORAX MAGELLANICUS (Gm.). (Common Shag.)

This Shag is very common along the coasts of the Falklands all the year round. It breeds on the cliffs in communities, making its nests, of mud and sea-weed, on the ledges of the rocks, and laying three eggs, which do not differ from those of the King-Shag in appearance.

It appears to me probable that the thick limy coating which covers the eggs of this group of birds is given them in order to strengthen the shell. Shags, when disturbed from their nests, frequently, even with this additional protection, break their eggs with their feet, as I have myself witnessed on more occasions than one.

The young of the Common Shag of the first year are uniform dark, nearly black in colouring; whereas the young of the King-Shag attain their adult plumage the first year, before leaving the Penguins' rookeries.

XVI.—*Narrative of an Excursion to the Mountains of the Richmond River, New South Wales, in quest of Prince Albert's Lyre-bird.* By AUGUSTUS A. LEYCESTER*.

IN order to ascertain the habits and economy of *Menura alberti* more correctly than I had hitherto done, towards the end of the month of April 1859, I made preparations for a shooting-campaign in the brushy mountains of the Richmond River. I first installed into my service two of my old favourite aborigines, Billy and Davy. The former was quite a young man, and had not yet taken to himself a wife; the latter was about thirty years of age, and, being of noble family, indulged in the right of two wives, one of whom had two children, and the other none. We

* Communicated to the Editor by John Gould, Esq., F.R.S., for insertion in 'The Ibis.'

agreed to take with us the unencumbered wife (whose name was "Polly") to wait upon us in camp, to fetch wood and water, and to provide fish and vegetables for our repasts. With these articles she supplied us abundantly; and though we seldom returned to camp till sunset, she generally had the fish and yams roasted, the tea made, and a sufficient supply of wood and water provided for the night; and, being of a merry disposition, was usually found on our arrival singing some aboriginal song and beating time on two of her husband's boomerangs as she sat at the same time watching the pots.

The morning of Wednesday, the 20th of April, was appointed for a start from my hut—a spot called by the blacks Durrigan, situated on the bank of Leycester's Creek, a tributary of the Richmond. I was aroused at grey dawn by the tinkling of my horse-bell, and by Davy knocking at the door and calling out at the top of his voice. Having, as he thought, impressed on my mind with his jargon the necessity of making haste, he put the horses in the yard, and came in for his breakfast with his two 'gins' and Billy. This being accomplished, I saddled Flour-boy, and packed Charcoal (our two horses) with about 2 cwt. of sundries, in the shape of tea, sugar, flour, tobacco, ammunition, blankets, a tent, and my apparatus for preserving skins, and other articles. Davy packed his wife at the same time with his own property, consisting of various "notions" too numerous to mention. Which of the two had the greatest load, my pack-horse or his 'gin,' would be difficult to say, but the latter bore it all cheerfully, and carried it without a word till the end of the day. Davy and Billy, taking each a double-barrelled gun, a dirk-knife, and a tomahawk, started first to kill game on the road, in order to have a supply of meat for dinner and supper, as we did not take any with us. Polly followed next with her load. Having passed over ten miles of a very rough country, about mid-day we halted to get some dinner on a beautiful little streamlet covered over with a canopy of the choicest Creepers, which dipped in festoons into the rushing stream below. The rivulet meandered down the Durrigan Valley, its murmurs blending with the cooing of Doves, the screeching of Parrots, the croaking of Frogs, and the shrill cry of the *Cicada*. This

was one of Nature's wildest bowers. Here Polly cast off her load (knowing it to be a mid-day camping ground) and commenced kindling a fire in her own way, disdaining any help. Billy and Davy soon came up, and set to work picking three Brush-turkeys (*Talegalla lathamii*) which they had shot on the way and preparing them for the spit. I employed myself in unpacking the horses and giving them water at the brook, having first to cut a road to it through the vines with my tomahawk. The horses having drunk stood by and looked on at us, there being no grass or anything they could eat. On turning round to see if the fire was in good order for roasting, I found Polly (the gin) had got a large Carpet-snake about nine feet long, curled up and in process of being cooked on a small fire she had made for herself. This snake she had killed on the road, and had packed it away in her "dillybag" without saying a word to any one, considering it her own private property. She had taken several large lumps out of the inside of the reptile, which was full of fat, and had laid them aside for the purpose of beautifying her delicate person. This operation she performed after dinner, heating the fat on the embers, and mixing it up in her hands with some powdered charcoal and a little saliva. With this composition she polished herself all over from head to foot, having first divested herself of her garments. These consisted merely of a short kilt made of the tails of opossums and squirrels, which formed a neat fringe; and when the polish (which was equal to any of Day and Martin's best) was finished, she looked quite charming. But to return to the dinner: Polly went to work at the snake and despatched several coils of it, together with a lump of "damper" and a quart of tea, which satisfied her. She then began at her polish, which being completed, she smoked her pipe and fell asleep. Billy and Davy, having put away a turkey each, together with damper and tea, smoked their pipes and went to sleep also.

It took me much longer to prepare and despatch my dinner, being rather more particular in my arrangements, and having to go to the stream to wash my turkey after having drawn and picked it—an operation considered by the blacks a wilful waste of the savoury parts of any game. The natives never make use

of water for culinary purposes of any kind ; nor do they employ it in their toilet, but use instead the aforesaid mixture of charcoal and grease. This is generally the work of the evening, when they assist one another in polishing. When this is completed they shine like a glass, and consider themselves dressed for their "opera," which consists of music, dancing, singing, and acting of various kinds.

Having finished dinner, I ring the horse-bell as a signal to be moving. The blacks jump up and shoulder their guns, and start off with the dog in search of game. Polly packs herself and starts, not waiting for me, and anxious to get her journey over. I saddle and pack the horses and follow, first looking round the camp to see if any knives, pipes, or tomahawks are left behind. I start the pack-horse first: he knows the way and gives me no trouble, but does his best to get over the rugged road, knowing that plenty of grass is before him at the next camp. The road being very rocky and precipitous renders it impossible to go faster than a walk. About half an hour after leaving camp, I overtook the gin having a "spell" halfway up a steep ridge. Here I was also obliged to take a spell, and give the horses wind. After a few minutes we started again, and in about half an hour reached the top of the ridge, which was pretty high. Through a glade in the brush we saw at a distance Bald Hill, where our next camp was to be.

This spot was an old camping-ground of mine (called by the blacks "Byangully"), and replete with every comfort a bush-camp in Australia can afford—that of grass, water, and game in abundance and of the best kind. It was a small prairie* on a bold hill, surrounded by a dense brush, twenty miles distant from the open country we had left behind. Whilst looking at our home that was to be for the night (distant about six miles), we suddenly heard a great shouting in a deep ravine about a mile below us. Polly thereupon became much frightened, and said the Tabbo blacks had come, and that they would murder her (Billy and Davy being at war with her tribe for stealing a young gin from them about two moons since). More shouting and two shots were heard, and then a general shout and

* A grassy hill bare of trees is so called in Australia.

two more shots. Polly upon this threw down her load, and commenced howling and beating her head with a stone till the blood ran down her face. More shots were fired, and then a single shout, upon which Polly brightened up, and said that that was Davy's shout, and that he had succeeded in driving his enemies off. We next heard a *wail for the dead*, and Polly struck up a song. I advised her to take up her pack and come on, but she took no notice of me, and continued howling. However, when I rode on, she followed, singing all the time, and so continued for about two miles, when she suddenly screamed out, and, throwing down her pack, rushed up to my horse and seized hold of my stirrup-leather. At the same instant fifteen blacks stood before us and stopped our horses. They all knew me, and I knew some of them. They said they had come to take Davy's gin, and that they would have her. One of the party, more excited than the rest, raised his spear to kill her, but hesitated to throw it for fear of striking my horse. They told me that Davy had shot Wallumbin Charlie dead, and wounded another of their men, and that Billy had nearly killed a third. Two of them then rushed upon Polly to drag her away. I drew my revolver, upon which they let her go, and she came back to me and took hold of my leg. Upon this they left, saying that they would kill Davy and Billy, and all the tribe, when I had done with them shooting, but that they had no wish to offend me, and would wait until I was gone to another country. [All the tribes round knew that I was going to leave the Richmond.]

This adventure made it late before we reached the Byangully camp. It was nearly dark when we arrived, and we observed at some distance that Davy and Billy were there before us and had made a large fire. When we came to the camp, Davy related the great battle they had fought, saying that they had fallen in with thirty Tabbo blacks, and, on hearing them at some distance off, had charged their guns with ball. [This I had given them in the morning for their protection, knowing the feud that had existed between the tribes for some time previous.] On their approach, Davy had fired and killed Wallumbin (the chief), and Billy had mortally wounded another man; the rest had fled away, some being wounded. Davy and Billy were in great glee at having gained the victory, and

having shot plenty of game we had a good supper. The bag consisted of two Brush-turkeys, two Pademeleons (*Halmaturus*), and five Pigeons. Out of these I selected two Wonga-wonga Pigeons (*Leucosarcia picata*) for my portion, and the remainder was appropriated to the men's night's feeding. Having watered and hobbled and bedded the horses, we set to work cooking our suppers. Polly's former fright did not appear to have reduced her appetite. She commenced supper on the remains of the Snake, which she had put by from dinner. This seemed to refresh her appetite and to prepare her for half a Pademeleon which she received from her husband. This was thrown to her over his shoulder, that being the natives' fashion of presenting their wives with anything choice. The natives never allow their wives to cook for them any meat or game, this being business of too great importance; and neither the women nor boys are allowed to touch the "Waukham" or Brush-turkey, there being some mystery attached to it. When supper was over, Davy suggested that all the guns should be loaded with ball cartridge, as he anticipated an attack on our camp during the night from the Tabbo blacks, and that a watch should be kept. Polly was set to keep the first watch till the moon rose, which would be about midnight; and Billy and Davy were to take the subsequent portion, that being the most likely time for a rush at us. Polly was ordered to sing a death-song all her watch, as a sure plan of keeping her awake, and as further being supposed to produce the effect of sending the soul of the dead black fellow to the right place, wherever that might be according to their belief. The monotonous tones of her voice and song soon sent me to sleep. Having received orders to wake me when the moon rose, she did so, as well as her husband and Billy. This was soon accomplished, as we all slept round one fire, not having erected my tent. When all were aroused Davy proposed another supper (or rather breakfast), which I agreed to. They then finished off all the game (with the exception of one pigeon which I kept for my breakfast), and in addition two opossums which had been added to the stock since our arrival in camp, having been killed whilst sporting among the branches of a tree close by. Polly and I then went to sleep, whilst Davy and Billy sung, and refreshed themselves with game and tea till

morning, without an attack having been made. The dog, however, rushed out once during the morning watch and got hold of a native Dingo, which he held until Davy with his "nulla nulla" despatched him. The tail of the dog being considered a trophy, it was not long before Davy had it off and skinned and tied it round his head. This acted as a band to keep his hair up, and added at the same time to his formidable appearance.

Morning came, and with it a beautiful day, for the sun shone on the Bald Hill with all its glory; and the horses were feeding within sight of the camp, close to a little spring that gushed out of a small basin in the side of the hill. Breakfast being over we again prepared for the road, having only ten miles to do this day; but it was a severe ten miles, the ranges being steeper than the day before.

We expected to reach our camping-ground on the top of the Tanning Mountain by mid-day, but did not do so till past 2 P.M. The mountain had a table top covered with fine grass and studded over with a beautiful species of Palm-tree, called by the aborigines "Tanning." Its sides were covered with a dense brush, containing Cedars of gigantic size. Here we formed our permanent camp for our attack on the Calvin, or *Menura alberti*, close to a little torrent of water which ran down a rocky ravine on the west side of the mountain and lost itself in the dense jungle below. Having hobbled and bedded the horses, and stopped up the track by which we came up, to prevent them from straying homewards, we despatched Billy for a supply of game, and spent the remainder of the day in completing our camp. Davy made for himself a bark "gungah," and as it had the appearance of rain, we built a bark shed over our kitchen fire. By the time we had completed our arrangements Billy returned with a supply of game, consisting of three Brush-turkeys, a Pademeleon, and two pigeons, being an ample supply for supper and the morrow's breakfast. Before sunset we rejoiced to hear the cry of three Menuras in different directions, which proved to us that we were in the right spot for the destruction of these most beautiful and curious birds. But to obtain their eggs and nest was the principal inducement to me for taking so much trouble, and it was only after nearly two months' hunting that I was rewarded by finding them. Day

after day passed away, and we could only discover two old nests and another being built. The male bird belonging to the latter we shot, not being aware at the time of the nest being close by. After having been out nearly six weeks, I began to despair of ever finding the eggs; but about a week before my excursion must terminate (as I had business to attend to in Sydney), having been out all day, and returning to camp with Davy hungry and wet through, Davy suddenly cried out, and invited my attention to a hen of the *Menura* flying off from her nest. Davy made a rush to get up to it, but fell back, being in too great a hurry. The difficulty was how to reach the nest, it being situated on a ledge of a projecting rock thirty feet above us; but Davy, taking it coolly, managed with great skill to get up within twelve feet of it. He then directed me to cut him a pole fifteen feet long, which I did, and handed it up to him. The foot of this he stationed on the ledge he was standing upon, and having placed the other end against the rock where the nest was, in less than a minute was up to the nest, and to our great delight pulled out an egg. I directed him to replace it and come down, as I wanted to find out whether any more would be laid, and we then returned to camp, much delighted with our day's work. Having shot plenty of game, we had a good supper. Davy received a new blanket, a pound of tobacco, and a bottle of grog (which was the reward promised to whoever discovered the egg first), and was in high glee all the evening. On the third day after this discovery we returned to the nest. The hen was on it, and I shot her as she flew off. Davy ascended as before. There was still only one egg, which he lowered down in a small bag, making use of his opossum belt which he wore round his waist as a string to let it down. A short time afterwards the dog found the male bird and treed him, upon which Davy shot him.

On blowing the egg, I found that it had been sat upon about a week. The old birds I stuffed, together with many others, which are now on their way to England along with the egg*. We remained a few days longer at the camp, and then returned to

* This egg is now in Mr. Gould's collection, and will be figured, along with that of *Menura superba* (which it greatly resembles), in his forthcoming work on the Oology of Australia.—ED.

Durrigan, from which place shortly afterwards I left for Sydney. I made the blacks a present of all the stores, which amounted to a considerable quantity of flour, tea, sugar, tobacco, pumpkins, and old clothes, and ordered a new gown to be made for Polly (Davy's gin). This she wore on the day of my leaving, making in some measure a better appearance than in her native polish of snakes'-fat and charcoal.

The following is a short summary of the result of my investigations into the habits of *Menura alberti*.

This bird has been hitherto found only on the Richmond and Tweed Rivers, in the dense brushes which clothe the mountains in those districts. It is most remarkable that, although similar mountains and brushes exist on the rivers both to the north and to the south of the Richmond and Tweed, this *Menura* is not to be found in them. The range of the species appears to be limited to a patch of country not wider than eighty by sixty miles; for though I have not been able to prove this fact myself, for want of time, yet I fancy the information which I have obtained is pretty correct, coming, as it does, from sawyers and blacks who are frequently travelling from one river to another.

The habits of *Menura alberti* are very similar to those of *M. superba*, as described by Mr. Gould. Having seen and watched both of these birds on their playgrounds, I find the *M. alberti* far superior in its powers of mocking and imitating the cries and songs of others of the feathered race to the *M. superba*; and its own peculiar cry or song is different, being of a much louder and fuller tone. I once listened to one of these birds that had taken up its quarters within 200 yards of a sawyer's hut, and had made himself perfect with all the noises of the sawyer's homestead. He imitated the crowing of the cocks, the cackling of the hens, and the barking and howling of the dogs, and even the painful screeching of sharpening or filing the saw. I shot him in the act of crowing. I have heard some persons say that the *Menura* is polygamous, but I never saw more than a pair together. The cock bird commences to sing at the first dawn of day. Each of them appears to have its walk or boundary, never infringing on another's ground. I have heard them day after day in the same spots, seldom nearer than a quarter of a

mile from each other. Whilst singing, they spread their tails over their heads like a peacock, and droop their wings to the ground, at the same time scratching and pecking up the earth. They sing in the morning and evening, and more so in winter than at any other season. The young cocks do not sing until they get their full tails. This, I fancy, takes place in the fourth year, as I have shot them in full feather with the tail in four different stages, the two centre curved feathers being the last to make their appearance. They live entirely upon small insects, principally beetles, and partake largely of sand, which accounts for their preferring sandy localities. Their flesh is not eatable, being dark, dry and tough, and quite unlike that of other birds. They breed in mid-winter, commencing to build their nests in May, laying in June, and having young in July. The nest is generally placed on the side of some steep rock where there is sufficient room to form a lodgement, so that no animals or vermin can approach it. It is constructed of small sticks, interwoven with moss and fibres of roots. The inside is lined with the skeleton leaf of a parasitical tree-fern, which resembles horse-hair. The nest is covered over, having the entrance on the side. Only one egg is laid, of a very dark colour, appearing as if it had been blotched over with ink. The young bird for the first month is covered with a white down, and remains in the nest about six weeks before it takes its departure. It is four years before it arrives at maturity. The native name for this *Menura* is "Calwin."

Singleton, Dec. 9, 1859.

XVII.—*Notice of the occurrence of the American Meadow-Starling* (*Sturnella ludoviciana*) *in England*. By PHILIP LUTLEY SCLATER.

A SHORT time ago, the Rev. Henry Temple Frere, of Burston Rectory, near Diss in Norfolk, forwarded for my inspection a specimen of the Meadow-Starling of North America (*Sturnella ludoviciana*), stated to have been killed in this country in the course of last year. Its plumage was in fine condition, and did not show the slightest traces of the bird having been in cap-