

his possession at Sydney—some in the form of letters to myself, others as direct communications; and these I have great pleasure in reproducing here.

“I send you an account of a new species of Cassowary, recently brought to Sydney by Captain Devlin in the cutter ‘Oberon.’ It was procured from the natives of New Britain, an island in the South Pacific Ocean, near to New Guinea, where it is known by the name of ‘Mooruk.’ The precise locality in which the bird was obtained was a native village under two hills named by navigators the Mother and Daughter, on that part of the coast of New Britain lying between Cape Palliser and Cape Stephen.

“The feet and legs, which are very large and strong, are of a pale ash-colour, and exhibit a remarkable peculiarity in the extreme length of the claw of the inner toe on each foot, it being nearly three times the length which obtains in the claws of the other toes. This bird, which is immature, also differs from the *Casuarus galeatus* in having a horny plate instead of a helmet-like protuberance on the top of the head, which callous plate has the character of, and resembles, mother-of-pearl darkened with black lead: the form of the bill differs considerably from that of the Emu (*Dromaius Novæ-Hollandiæ*), being narrower, longer, and more curved, and having a black and leathery cere at the base; behind the plate of the head is a small tuft of black hair-like feathers, which are continued in greater or lesser abundance over most parts of the neck.”

In Dr. Bennett’s next communication, direct to the Society, he says:—

“On the 26th of October, 1858, the ‘Oberon’ cutter of forty-eight tons arrived in Sydney, having two fine young specimens of the ‘Mooruk’ on board, stated to be male and female. The captain informed me he had had them eight months, that he procured them soon after his arrival at New Britain, and since that time had been trading about the islands. They were about half the size of the specimen sent to England last year. Captain Devlin informs me that the natives capture them when very young, and rear them by hand. The old birds are very swift of foot, and possess great strength in the legs; on the least alarm they elevate the head, and, seeing danger, dart among the thick bush, thread about in localities where no human being could follow them, and disappear like magic. Their powers of leaping are very extraordinary. It was from this circumstance the first bird brought from New Britain was lost: from its habit of leaping, it one day made a spring on the deck and went overboard; it was blowing a strong breeze at the time, and the bird perished. In warm weather, the Captain informs me, they are fond of having a bucket of salt water thrown over them, and seem to enjoy it very much. I succeeded in purchasing these birds; and Captain Slater (the present commander of the ‘Oberon’) brought them to my house in a cab; and when placed in the yard, they walked about as tame as turkeys. They approached any one that came into the yard, pecking the hand as if desirous of being fed, and were very docile. They began by pecking at a bone in the yard, probably not having tasted any meat for some time, and would not, while engaged upon it, touch some boiled potatoes which were thrown to them; indeed we found afterwards they fed better out of a dish than from the ground—no doubt, having been accustomed early to be fed in that manner. They were as familiar as if born and bred among us for years, and did not require time to reconcile them to their new situation, but became sociable and quite at home at once. We found them next day rather too tame, or, like spoilt pets, too often in the way. One or both of them would walk into the kitchen; while one was dodging under the tables and chairs, the other would leap upon the table, keeping the cook in a state of excitement; or they would be heard chirping in the hall, or walk into the library in search of food or information, or walk up stairs, and then be quickly seen descending again, making their peculiar chirping, whistling noise: not a door could be left open, but in they walked, familiar with all. They kept the servants constantly on the alert: if one of them went to open the door, on turning round she found a ‘Mooruk’ behind her; for they seldom went together, generally wandering apart from each other. If any attempt was made to turn them out by force, they would dart rapidly round the room, dodging about under the tables, chairs, and sofas, and then end by squatting down under a sofa or in a corner; and it was impossible to remove the bird, except by carrying it away: on attempting this, the long, powerful, muscular legs would begin kicking and struggling, and soon get released, when it would politely walk out of its own accord. I found the best method was to entice them out, as if you had something eatable in the hand, when they would follow the direction in which you wished to lead them. The housemaid attempting to turn the bird out of one of the rooms, it gave her a kick and tore her dress. They walked into the stable among the horses, poking their bills into the manger. When writing in my study, a chirping, whistling noise is heard; the door, which is ajar, is pushed open, and in walk the ‘Mooruks,’ who quietly pace round the room, inspecting everything, and then as peaceably go out again. If any attempt is made to turn them out, they leap and dodge about, and exhibit a wonderful rapidity of movement, which no one would suppose possible from their quiet gait and manner at other times. Even in the very tame state of these birds, I have seen sufficient of them to know that, if they were loose in a wood, it would be impossible to catch them, and almost as difficult to shoot them. One day, when apparently frightened at something that occurred, I saw one of them scour round the yard at a swift pace, and speedily disappear under the archway so rapidly that the eye could hardly follow it, upsetting all the poultry in its progress that could not get out of the way. The lower half of the stable-door, about 4 feet high, was kept shut, to prevent them going in; but this proved no obstacle, as it was easily leaped over by these birds. They never appeared to take any notice of, or be frightened at, the Jabiru or Gigantic Crane, which was in the same yard, although that sedate, stately bird was not pleased at their intrusion. One day I remarked the Jabiru spreading his long wings, and clattering his beak, opposite one of the ‘Mooruks,’ as if in ridicule of their wingless condition. ‘Mooruk,’ on the other hand, was pruning its feathers, and spreading out its funny little apology for wings, as if proud of displaying the stiff horny shafts with which they were adorned. Captain Devlin says the natives consider them to a certain degree sacred, rear them as pets, and have great affection for them; he is not aware that they are used as food, but if so, not generally; indeed, their shy disposition and power of rapid running, darting through the brake and bush, would almost preclude their capture.

“The height of the largest or male of these young birds, to the top of the back, was 2 feet 2 inches, and of the female 2 feet. The height of the largest or male bird, when erect, to the top of the head, was 3 feet 2 inches, and of the female 3 feet.”

An egg presented to me by Dr. Bennett, which I believe to be truly that of the Mooruk, is $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long by $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches broad; the ground-colour very pale buff, with the entire surface covered with pale-green corrugations.

One of the accompanying Plates represents the head and neck of the Mooruk of the natural size; the other an adult reduced, with a young bird in the distance. I am happy to acknowledge the assistance rendered me in the preparation of these drawings by Mr. Wolf, Mr. Richter, and Mr. Wood.