

THE DESTRUCTION OF NATIVE BIRDS IN
NEW SOUTH WALES.

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DURING a visit to the head-waters of two of the North-Coast rivers, I ascertained that an incredible number of the beautifully plumaged males of the Rifle-bird and Regent Bower-bird were destroyed throughout the year, a large export trade being done in the skins of these species, chiefly for the purposes of adornment and decoration of ladies' hats and dresses.

The wanton destruction of a more modestly plumaged, but equally attractive species, has been brought prominently under the notice of the public through an article entitled "The destruction of Lyre-birds," in the columns of a newspaper,¹ in which the writer records that a man, carrying a number of Lyre-birds' tails, or rather portions of tails, had called on him the previous day, asking if he would purchase one. Inquiries made elicited the fact that the man had collected about two hundred and fifty of them on the Paterson River, New South Wales, during the open season, and a lot more the previous one. The pertinent question is asked, "Why should any one be allowed to shoot these beautiful birds?"

The three species of Lyre-bird comprising the genus *Menura*, all of which are found in New South Wales, are possessors of the richest and most varied notes of any bird in Australia, and as mocking-birds are unequalled in the world. The tails referred to above, which I saw being offered for sale in George and Pitt-streets, Sydney, on the same day all belonged to the oldest described species of the genus, *Menura superba*, and were those of the male birds only. As the Lyre-bird builds in the early winter months, and the single egg laid by it in a season is usually deposited in July, it is evident that many of these birds were shot while paired, for the close season does not commence until the 1st of August. All species of the Lyre-bird, the Rifle-bird, and the Regent Bower-bird, should be accorded absolute protection throughout the year. "The Bird Protection Act of 1893," is a very useful piece of legislation, but its clauses are, unfortunately, as a rule, more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

¹ *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 29th August, 1900.