The following extract is from a letter received by the editor from the London correspondent of the *North Queensland Gazette*, relating to an alleged remarkable habit on the part of those birds of paradise commonly known as rifle-birds (*Ptilorhis*):—

"The birds collect sloughed snake-skins for use in connection with their nests. When the construction of the nest is finished, they place these skins around the outside of the structure in such a natural manner as to convey the impression to a casual observer that a living snake is coiled there. . . . A hawk, eagle, or crow, observing what it takes to be a nest with a snake coiled about it, is not likely to desire closer acquaintance." R. L.

THE ROYAL CANADIAN INSTITUTE.

ESTABLISHED in 1849 at Toronto, then Upper Canada, through the energy and activity of a rising young engineer, Mr. (now Sir) Sandford Fleming, as secretary, the "Canadian Institute" was incorporated by Royal Charter on November 4, 1851, and the title "Royal" has recently been conferred upon it. From the first this institute discussed questions and published memoirs of world-wide interest, under the able guidance of men of the type of Sir Sandford Fleming, Kivus Tully, Sir William E. Logan, E. Billings, Henry Youle Hind, Thomas Ridout, J. C. Browne, and others.

The objects of incorporation included the encouragement and general advancement of all the sciences, arts, and manufactures; in fact, for promoting all branches of knowledge dealing with the resources and development of a new country, not forgetting industrial productions and commerce, besides the establishment of a museum to promote the purposes of science and the general interests of the society. For sixty-five years these objects have been pursued by the institute, and with a membership of sixty-four in 1850, the number has increased to nearly 400. The institute has published volumes of Transactions that are a credit to its good name, both in its earliest days and of recent date. The institute has also materially assisted Sir Sandford Fleming in his publications on the zone system of time reckoning, which has been adopted the civilised world over. In its library there is found excellent reference material in many departments of special research work. In 1913 the number of exchanges received by the Royal Canadian Institute was 2180, whilst the publications received annually now reached 4000. Weekly meetings take place during the season, when leaders of thought in science, history, and literature are invited to take part in the reading of papers, and delivery of lectures. These meetings are open to the public.

It was on April 2 of this year that the title "Royal" was conferred on the Canadian Institute of Toronto by his Majesty King George V., recognition of the same having been intimated to the institute through his Royal Highness Field-Marshal the Duke of Connaught, Governor-General of Canada. Besides sending a personal message to his Honour, Sir John Gibson, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, conveying his warmest congratulations to the Royal Canadian Institute on the recognition and honour conferred upon them by H.M. the King, his Royal Highness showed his interest in the institute and its progress by accepting the post of patron. A communication was read from Sir Sandford Fleming (Ottawa), and congratulatory speeches and addresses were given, in which Sir Edmund Walker, President Falconer, Principal Peterson, Dr. Coleman, F.R.S., and the presiding officer, Mr. Frank Arnould, K.C., took part. Sir Sandford Fleming was unanimously elected honorary

president of the new "Royal Canadian Institute," and his three sons, Sandford, Walter, and Hugh, were formally elected members under the new title.

H. M. AMI.

THE CAMBRIDGE "PREVIOUS" EXAMINATION.

THE syndicate appointed by the Senate on May 9, 1913, to "consider what changes, if any, are desirable in the regulations relating to the Previous Examination, in the mutual relations of the Previous Examination and the examinations held by the Highest Grade Schools Syndicate and the Local Examinations and Lectures Syndicate," has reported on somewhat drastic lines.

The syndicate has considered carefully the regulations and arrangements for the existing Previous Examination, and other examinations which are accepted as exempting from the Previous Examination, and has consulted the representatives of the Board of Education, the Headmasters' Conference, the Incorporated Association of Headmasters, and the Assistant-masters' Association, as well as certain members of the University of Oxford, who are concerned with analogous inquiries.

Two hundred headmasters of public and secondary schools sent replies to questions which were addressed to them by the syndicate. The syndicate is of opinion that the existing Previous Examination is an unsatisfactory test, and is not adapted to the present situation in secondary education, and it therefore recommends the introduction of changes, both administrative and educational.

The administrative change advocated is the establishment of a new syndicate which shall be called the Examinations Syndicate, which would take over the work of the present Local Lectures and Examinations Syndicate, so far as examinations are concerned, and of the Highest Grade School Examinations Syndicate. The new syndicate would control the whole of the "pass" examinations of the University.

The educational changes, proposed in the report, endeavour to coordinate the examinations which qualify for study at the University with the entrance examinations to the various professions; and throughout the deliberations the scheme of the Board of Education which is designed to assist such coordinations has been kept in view.

The syndicate proposes to abolish the distinction which now exists between the examination for candidates for honours and that for the "pass" degree. The additional subjects will be done away with.

The compulsory subjects which remain are divided into three groups, each of which may be taken separately. The first group consists of languages; two papers will be set in each of the following:—Latin, Greek, French, and German. Greek is no longer to be compulsory, but Latin must be one of the languages offered.

The second group consists of mathematics and science: algebra and arithmetic, geometry, physics, and chemistry, or experimental mechanics.

The third group consists of English: essay and précis writing, selected books, and outlines of English history.

The examination will be held four times a year at Cambridge only.

The report will be discussed by the Senate at the beginning of the October term. So far as can be gathered, the resident opinion is in general favourable to its findings, though there is sure to be some criticism as to detail by the much-enduring college tutors who will find the task of entering their pupils complicated.