

THE ANTS OF VICTORIA.

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[Part I.]

Probably the most interesting, and neglected, group of insects is the large family of ants, *Formicidæ*. This great continent is very rich in large and peculiar species, which are not found elsewhere, yet little or nothing is known concerning them. The habits and life history of even our commonest forms are unknown. This is the more unfortunate because, with the advance of settlement, the natural bush, gradually, is becoming cultivated land, and the ants, like many other native animals, slowly, but surely, are disappearing. Before it is too late, it would be well to learn all we can of these insects; even now, some species, which are very local, have become extremely rare.

The difficulty attached to the study of Australian ants has always been the lack of popular literature on the subject; unfortunately, such literature does not exist. Most of our ants have been described in various scientific journals, published in German, French and Italian. To the average nature lover, these records are uninteresting, since they are technical descriptions of the ants. They are, of course, essential, from a scientific point of view, but make little appeal to one bent on the study of ants in the bush.

Books published in Australia contain very little concerning ants. The best of them is *Australian Insects*, by W. W. Froggatt, published in 1907. In 1905, the same zealous entomologist published a catalogue, with notes on a few species, of the Australian ants. Mr. H. Tryon, in 1888, published some notes on Queensland ants, in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland. To the *Victorian Naturalist*, in 1903, E. E. Barker contributed a good paper on Bull-dog Ants; F. P. Dodd contributed interesting notes to the same journal, in 1902. The most useful book on ants in general is that by Professor W. M. Wheeler, entitled *Ants: Their Structure, Development and Behaviour*. It is published by the Columbia University Press, New York, U.S.A.