

shower of rotten wood and bark rained from above, and 'Banjo' ran from tree to tree looking up at the unattainable birds and barking with excitement. About one trunk he circled, barking and sniffing, and then again returned to it, still not absolutely satisfied; and I suppose it was this second visit and the tone of his bark that caused me instantly to mark the tree. It was a kamahi of considerable girth, but its shell only, alive and green; the interior was rotted away until almost level with the ground, and the space within—about 2 feet in diameter—floored with wood powder, dry and sweet. On this brown carpet rested two eggs, small for the size of the Parrot, dull white in colour, and evidently much incubated. The interior of the hole had been gouged and chiselled by the sitting hen until no scrap of it within neck-stretch remained unmarked." The author succeeded in obtaining photographs of the Kaka at the nesting-tree.

Correspondence.

WORK OF THE UNION: SOME SUGGESTIONS.

To the Editors of "The Emu."

SIRS,—In the last issue of *The Emu* (vol. xiv., part 3) two of our most prominent ornithologists make certain disassociated remarks that seem to me to be well worth taking into serious consideration conjunctively, and to merit amplification.

Firstly, Mr. A. J. Campbell, in his article on "Missing Birds," states:—"Would it not be well for members to unite to protect, or to aid in the protection of, some of the fast-failing forms of our avifauna? In point of fact, is not protection of native birds one of the chief planks of the R.A.O.U.?" And Mr. Henry L. White, when writing on "Australian Cuckoos," says:—"I consider that the future preservation of our native birds is largely in the hands of the public school teachers."

In offering a few remarks on matters arising from these notes, I want first to endorse Mr. White's opinion. Certainly, the ornithologist of the future is under the care of the school teacher at present, and on the training he receives there depends markedly his subsequent attitude toward the study. And it is equally certain that, if boys have instilled in them a proper appreciation of birds (and, accordingly, a protective spirit), a vast amount of good will have been accomplished. Very well. What, then, is the R.A.O.U. doing toward this desirable end? Not all that it should, I am afraid. That many members have assisted the Education Departments of their respective States in a general way is true enough; but systematic service is needed.

To begin with, the official guides on the highway of knowledge—the teachers—should, I think, be given more attention. Speaking only of Victorian schools, I know that there are many teachers who take a warm, vital interest in our birds, and find them a source of inspiration; but I know, too, alas! that many

public school instructors do but "teach birds" because they must, and then in the most cursory way. It naturally follows that this spirit of indifference communicates itself to the plastic minds of the scholars, and consistent indifference is oftentimes more harmful to a movement than is open antagonism. Such teaching ought not to be, and the Union should, I think, make a special point of obtaining the interest of Australia's school teachers. Induce them to become members of the Union; show them that, by not being on intimate terms with the birds, they have thus far missed one of the chief joys of life; show to those who have not already realized it the value of utilizing the outdoor life-interests of the child, and ask them to lead the child gently to *feel* what one of our American friends termed "the song of existence pulsing through the process of the seasons." Keep out the scientific part of the business. The smaller child is concerned only with whatsoever things are lovely; interest in technicalities will unobtrusively grow as this circular path of knowledge broadens.

With regard to nomenclature, I may cite a personal experience with a class of budding teachers (ages 14 to 18) with whom I had the pleasure of discussing birds once weekly for eight or nine months of last year.* Aided in the field by Dr. J. A. Leach's valuable "Bird Book," these young people got on with their subject so well that they were led to inquire into the generic and specific titles. Then the trouble began. It was not the glimpse of the trinomial system they received that caused it so much as the alterations of many recognized scientific names to others whose derivations tell nothing (proper names for genera are an especial abomination), and the irritating splitting of genus upon genus. What folly all this chopping and changing is! Why cannot the British Union's sane policy (quoted recently by Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley) of allowing long-recognized names to stand be followed?

In conclusion, let me touch on the initial part of Mr. Campbell's quoted note concerning "Missing Birds." I would like to say that, if members are to unite to the end of protecting fast-failing aviforms, they will have early to consider the menace within their own ranks. For who can gainsay the fact that close collecting is completing the work of natural agencies in thinning out such birds? Certainly, as Mr. Campbell hints, it is necessary that something decisive should be done, and, by way of a gentle beginning, I would suggest that only a *national*, judicious collector should take a gun on the annual excursions of the Union to out-of-the-way localities. Then overlapping would be avoided, and there would not be the danger—and bad example to "laymen"—of every rare bird that is seen being sacrificed. To awaken in a child (young or old) interest and delight at, say, the value and winsome ways of "the psalmist of the dawn" (*Eopsaltria australis*) is worth much to Australia.

Maryborough (Vic.), 29/1/15.

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* In an honorary capacity.—Eds.