

NOTES ON SOME NEW ZEALAND BIRDS.—During the winters of 1881 and 1882 I had opportunities of observing a few New Zealand birds, and of obtaining some skins. Some of these birds are becoming rare ; it may therefore be advisable to record even the little that I learned about them. One day I entered a wood on the outskirts of Invercargill, and, after waiting for a long time, descried two large, silent birds in the tree-tops, which from their movements I knew to be Parrots. They were Kakas (*Nestor meridionalis*), and as I saw no more of the Kaka I concluded that it rarely showed itself in the daytime in the neighbourhood of dwellings. At Queenstown I obtained the skin of a Kakapo (*Stringops habroptilus*), and heard that it still haunted the regions around Earnslaw (9,165 feet). A thick under-covering of down feathers protects it from their Alpine cold. The face of the Kakapo has been compared to that of an Owl. But the head is cuneate, not discoid. The Kakapo, with a wing  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches long, is believed to have lost the power of flight in comparatively recent times, and to have formerly been arboreal in its habits. The upper mandible is festooned, and the culmen channelled laterally for about the half of its length. The under surface of the lower mandible is deeply channelled lengthwise. The festoons may have enabled the Kakapo to retain a firmer hold of fruits or their stones than it could otherwise have done. The channels, by virtue of a law of physics, strengthen the mandibles, and thus lessen the risk of fracture. The distal portions of the rachises of the projecting feathers near the gape and the nostrils are devoid of webs and hair-like. The Lesser Grey Kiwi (*Apteryx oweni*) is furnished with long hairs\* near the gape and on the forehead. One of the hairs on a stuffed skin is  $1\frac{7}{8}$  inches in length. May not these hairs serve the Kiwi as feelers in the dark ?

At Akaroa in July I found the Korimakos (*Anthornis melanura*) feasting on the honey in the blossoms of the loquats, whilst Kingfishers (*Halcyon vagans*), in bright attire of blue and green and fawn, darted into and out of the gardens, but whereas it was a difficult matter to drive the Korimakos away from the tree, the Kingfishers would not allow one even to approach them. There are no *Maluri* or *Acanthizæ* in New Zealand, and I saw no birds which resembled them in point of domesticity, nor any which reminded me of the Scarlet-breasted and Flame-breasted Robins of Australia and Tasmania. I have known a male of the latter species to perch on a stick held in the hand, and, on another occasion, one of these birds snatched a grub from my outstretched hand.—J. R. M'CLYMONT, M.A. Sandy Bay, Tasmania.

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PERFORMING PARROTS.—It is exceedingly interesting to know that our Australian birds exhibit undoubted reasoning powers,

\* Used provisionally of a non-mammalian product.



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