

OBSERVATIONS FIFTY YEARS AGO.

(Extracts from Potts' "Out in the Open," 1882.)

PARROTS (Potts).—"It may be thought not out of place to make brief allusion to the influence which some of the habits of the *kaka* exercise on the condition of the forest; admitted amongst the *Trichoglossinae* as a honey-eating bird, in its search after this portion of its food, it may cause the fertilisation of the blossoms of trees, and thus assist in their propagation. Its love of insect food, and the toil which it undertakes for the sake of gratifying this appetite, which Nature has implanted in the bird, materially affect the economy of the timber forests it inhabits. Although so often accused of injuring trees by stripping down the bark, from careful observation we are unwilling to believe a flourishing tree is ever damaged by its beak; it is the apparently vigorous, but really unsound, tree that is attacked, already doomed by the presence of countless multitudes of insects of various species, of which it is at once the food and refuge, either in their perfect or larval state. . . .

"Living in trees, when disturbed it hops amongst the branches with much dexterity, beak and wings assisting its awkward-looking but rapid progress as it threads its way amongst leaves and sprays with unruffled plumage; the peculiar formation of its grasping feet enable it to execute wonderful feats of agile climbing.

"*Kakas* do not travel in large flocks, most frequently but two or three are to be seen in company, sometimes six or eight are noticed together, solitary wanderers are not unfrequently observed; when their cry is imitated it is often replied to. Their steady, slow, and somewhat laboured flight when journeying is not to be mistaken for that of any other native bird that we have observed on the wing; there is a methodical painstaking style that affords quite a contrast to their gay, rattling, offhand soaring and gliding about the bush; it exhibits the proper difference of behaviour to be assumed under business-like and pleasure-taking aspects; man is not the only biped enjoying the privilege of duality. In dull, moist weather, when the strange-voiced *tui* is silent, the *kaka* is perhaps more noisy than usual; its call is heard at the earliest dawn, even in the night it is not by any means a silent bird.

It lays its four white eggs on the decayed wood, without any further supply of softer material by way of nest.

" We have never found the discovery of the nest a very easy matter to accomplish, unless mayhap it was disclosed