

Cry of the Kea for Help.

Clamour of Short-sighted Graziers.

Again the users of sheep-runs, held on peppercorn rentals in Alpine country of the South Island, are clamouring for extinction of the kea, at the taxpayers' expense. All the old hearsay nonsense against this bird is being aired again by persons who hope to scare the Government. Therefore, the main feature of this "Bulletin" is a timely defence of a much-maligned bird, the reprint of a special article written by a well-known authority on birds, Mr. Sidney Porter, for the "Avicultural Magazine," published by the English Avicultural Society. Mr. Porter spent more than six months in New Zealand, where he made very careful observations of many species of birds, particularly the kea. His high reputation for accurate study commands respect for his comments on the kea.

It is well to remind the Government that action in the Alpine country should not be against the kea, which helps to conserve the soil-protecting flora there by distributing seeds, but against the farmers whose tussock-burning practices are destroying Nature's insurance policy. The shallow soil, lying on debris, is bared by those offenders, and the way is left clear for the free play of erosive forces which threaten the much more valuable and more extensive farming lands of the lower levels. The farmers of alluvial valleys and the plains—if they are really interested in their own welfare—should urge the Government to resume the high tussock country and prohibit the burning and grazing that menace the better farming areas. Such procedure would be a matter of common-sense for the common-weal. The comparatively small band of high-country agitating graziers against the kea may be fairly described as a little tail trying to wag the big body of farming.

Thousands of feet above sea-level, on the highest ranges of the Southern Alps of New Zealand, amid scenes of unparalleled splendour, where the glittering snow-capped peaks of New Zealand's highest mountains pierce the celestial blue of the Southern skies, in regions of eternal snow and ice, where the great blue-green glaciers roll almost imperceptibly down from the highest peaks, at the very limit of the stunted alpine growth, we find that strangest of strange birds, the kea, to my mind the most fascinating and peculiar bird I have ever come across.

For countless æons of time this highly aberrant parrot has fought the elements and won its battle, becoming in the course of time perfectly adapted to its environment. But, alas, on the coming of man to its mountain fastness, the kea found an enemy against whom