

22nd July, 1901.—Later last evening we heard a kaka screaming in distress in the scrub near the house, but could not see it, and this morning we saw a tui attacking one that seemed very tame, so I got a rod and snared it, and now I have a grand young kaka in a cage, so tame that it will eat out of my hand. It is a vigorous, fightable young male with apparently a slight dent on top of his head, but how he got it I do not know. He is terribly afraid of his shadow in the glass, and screams as he did last night, so it might have been another spiteful old kaka that bit him. He had some fried sole and bread-and-jam for breakfast, and a bit of grilled chop for dinner, and a little bit of suet. He holds the food in the heel of his fist, and eats heartily just as if I had him for months, and this upsets my old idea of their being hard to feed.

My promising pet did not last long, but took sick and died within a month. I kept him in a cage nearly 4 ft. square with an earthen and sandy floor. He took plenty of exercise, cutting at his cage for liberty, which I thought was all right when he ate so heartily, but he was always anxious and worried, and probably too old when I got him. I may have trusted his own judgment too much in his choice of food, and I think I cheated him into eating bread by putting jam on it, for he would not eat bread without the jam. Bread had formed a pulp in his crop, which seemed to have remained in it for a long time. I probably made a mistake in giving him too much food, especially strange food such as meat, bread, jam, and fat, while I could easily have given him more wood-grubs. His gizzard was so small that it would go in a lady's thimble, and it was full of the skins of big grubs I had given him.

PIGEONS (*CARPOPHAGA*).

The New Zealand pigeons are such quiet creatures that they leave me little to say about them, though I have been living near them for about a score of years. Happily there is only the one kind, which saves all the christenings and the straw-splittings about species, and the males and females are so much alike that I do not know one from the other. Therefore, I know nothing of their social rules or of their fights and courtships, if ever they have any; and they are so silent that it is hardly worth their while having voices at all. You may hear a single "coo" from one of them, repeated two or three times at intervals, but after that you may not hear one again for months, though there may be a dozen pigeons within hearing every day. To make up for this they are rather noisy with their wings, and may convey impressions to each other by this means, because I can tell by the flap of their wings whether they are lighting on a tree or leaving it; also by the sound of their flight whether they are going away or coming. This was easily acquired in Taranaki, where the forest was so dense that you could not see them half the time up in the trees but could hear them quite plainly.

In ten years I only found one pigeon's nest at Te Anau, and that was such a slight collection of material that I would not have taken it for a nest at all if the pigeon had not been sitting on it. It was in a *Schefflera* tree about 10 ft. from the ground, and was so loosely built of twigs that I could see the young one up through the bottom of the nest. I climbed up a sapling and there was but one young one, only just hatched and shivering with the cold, so that I came away at once in hopes that the mother would soon come back. I thought I saw other nests at different times, and once I thought I could see an egg in one, but was not sure of it, which will indicate what a poor nest they build. There is many a bunch of twigs lodged in the trees that is just as dense as a pigeon's nest, and thus the builders of frail nests would be most likely to survive, because they would attract least notice. I also saw some nests in Taranaki, but so frail that I thought them unfinished. They must be skilfully built to prevent the hatcher working the egg through them. Though the pigeon can hit hard with her wing, her feathers and skin are so tender that she was never intended for fighting, and must depend upon concealing her nest. One nest I saw at Inglewood was on a mat of kekeis in a great red-pine, but I think it would not have lasted there very long, the place was so full of rats; and the pigeon that built there was probably preparing for the extinction of her family.

At Te Anau they live mostly on miro-berries, also red- and white-pine berries in the late autumn, then on kowhai-leaves, and, in the early summer, on the white blossoms of the ribbonwood up in the high gullies. But they used to eat several other leaves and blossoms. At Linwood, where they were very tame; they used to sit on the garden hedges and eat the leaves of the Cape broom.

They are reputed to be very good for the table, but I think a good deal of this is due to their fine appearance and their size, and the balance purely to faith; for they are always flavoured with the food they are eating, and most of this is so insipid that I would not pick up a pigeon at Te Anau unless I was very hungry. Though the weka is reputed to be the very worst table-bird, I would sooner eat one than a miro- or kowhai-flavoured pigeon.

They are also described as poor fliers and as easy prey for the "bush hawk," but I have often seen this hawk start them, and they have always flown up in the open, while all the other birds would dive into the bush. This is the best proof that the average pigeon is able to beat the hawk on the wing. Of course, a time will come in the life of every pigeon when she is not able to beat the hawk, and that is why he will follow her a little way to see if she is up to the proper standard. If not he takes her, because it is part of his business to do so. Old-age pensions are not allowed among pigeons. The hawk may also catch weakly or inferior ones in a fair hunt, and thus prevent the propagation of inferiors, as we do when we cull our animals or plants to maintain them at their best. He may sometimes catch a good one by stratagem, for I have found him eating a good fat pigeon.

When the hawk sits up on a high tree many little birds will come up and insult him by sitting about within a yard of him, and even pretending to swoop at him. This is because they know that they can get speed on quicker than he can; but when he is coming along at forty miles an hour it is only their tails that are to be seen as they dive into the bush. Thus a