



Nest and Eggs (*in situ*) of the Emu.

FROM A PHOTO. BY A. J. CAMPBELL.

Emu Eggs.

By A. J. CAMPBELL, MELBOURNE.

AN article on "Emu Feathers" from the pen of Mr. D. Le Souëf, C.M.Z.S., appeared in the initial number of our journal. Therefore it may not be out of place to record a few remarks concerning "Emu Eggs" in opening vol. ii. Such remarks are "seasonable," because Emus are now (midwinter) incubating where conditions are favourable in the great interior tracts of our island continent. Formerly, of course, Emus also nested near the sea borders, but now have either been extirpated or driven back by an ever-advancing tide—the tide of civilisation.

Emu eggs, by reason of their size, shape, and colour, are amongst the most beautiful objects in nature. Their size (about 5 inches long by $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches broad) places them with the largest-sized birds' eggs of the world. Their shape is a graceful ellipse, while their colour ranges through the art greens—dark and light. An average weight for an egg when full is about 23 ounces. Deducting 3 ounces for the shell there remain 20 ounces, equivalent to the bulk of 20 ordinary domestic fowls' eggs—not a bad breakfast for a small family. Some persons consider Emu eggs tasteless, but they are really a delicacy. When cooked (fried) the yolk is lightish yellow in colour, and the albumen, although firm, is semi-transparent and does not become opaque white like the common hen's egg.

The nest depicted in the illustration (plate i.) I had the enjoyment and good fortune to photograph some seasons ago when Emu-egging (by permit) in Riverina, N.S.W. How delightful to me are the reminiscences of that winter camp-out, occurring during a succession of calm, cloudless days, succeeded by clear, frosty nights! The winter's day did seem so short. Hardly had the sun risen out of the plain from behind the pine ridges and chased away the cold, grey mist hanging in the red gum tops along the river, ere it seemed to "slope its westering wheel" and sink all too soon behind the box forest, where naked trees, ring-barked, stood silent emblems of death and desolation—a scene rendered additionally weird in its setting of back-lighting. With darkness there set in a freezing temperature and the awesome hush typical of a winter's night in Riverina—a hush that makes one yearn for some sound, however slight, to break the overpowering stillness. Where are the evensongs of the myriads of crickets that cheer the summer tide? Gone, with the great flooded wastes of backwaters from the Wakool and the Neimur of the previous spring—God's bountiful supply that man has wantonly wasted. Is it any wonder that droughts exist?

But to return to the Emu's nest. The photo. has never been previously reproduced, and represents one of six nests I either

found or had the opportunity of examining myself in the open. This nest was most picturesquely situated, protected in front by some dead weatherbeaten branches. Close behind was a small dry box-tree (eucalypt) standing with green suckers sprouting from its base. The nest was simply a flat bed (about 4 feet in length by $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in breadth, and 2 inches in thickness) composed of dead leaves, grass, and a few feathers of the bird, but chiefly eucalypt leaves, evidently plucked from the branchlets immediately above. What a subdued setting for the circle of eggs of matchless green! There were eight, and a fractured shell. Total, nine, an average clutch.

I think I have somewhere already mentioned that the day will come when the exportation of Emu eggs for commercial purposes will be prohibited. Having due regard for the proper protection of this noble, ornamental, and purely Australian bird, is the time not now ripe for legislation? More national work ahead for the Australasian Ornithologists' Union. There has always been a demand for Emu egg-shells in the great market of the world—London—where thousands of eggs are yearly sent. It is stated on the authority of a Sydney newspaper that in one season a single station hand in Queensland gathered no less than 1,123 Emu eggs, which realized in the local market 12s. per dozen. The majority, no doubt, found their way to London, where they would be worth 5s. or 6s. each.

A Young King Penguin at the Melbourne Zoo.

BY D. LE SOUËF, C.M.Z.S., &c.

A SPECIMEN of this interesting species (*Aptenodytes patagonica*), about six months old, was secured by Captain Douglas, of the s.s. *Damascus*, when visiting the Crozet Islands in the southern seas in search of some supposed castaways. The bird is covered with very dense soft down, of a dark greyish-brown. The beak is black, and measures 3 inches in length from the gape and 2 inches from the forehead. The tongue is very curious, being white in colour and almost round, and on the upper surface has three rows from near the point and four rows from half-way down of soft white spines, inclining backwards, and they extend to the back of the entrance to the windpipe. The tongue is .25 inch in thickness, and the spines the same length. The sides of the roof of the mouth have also serrations about the same size, and a row of serrations on each inner side of the lower beak, so that when the tongue is pressed down the rows of serrations are in contact with it on each side. Those towards the front are white, but the hinder ones darker. The length of wing is 11 inches, and length of the leg from the thigh joint