

and beautiful white crane (*Ardea Symmatophora*) and the blue crane, there is a bittern (*Botaurus poeciloptilus*), the *Pukeko* (*Porphyrio Melanotus*) and several smaller birds. Of these the red-legged *Pukeko* is by far the



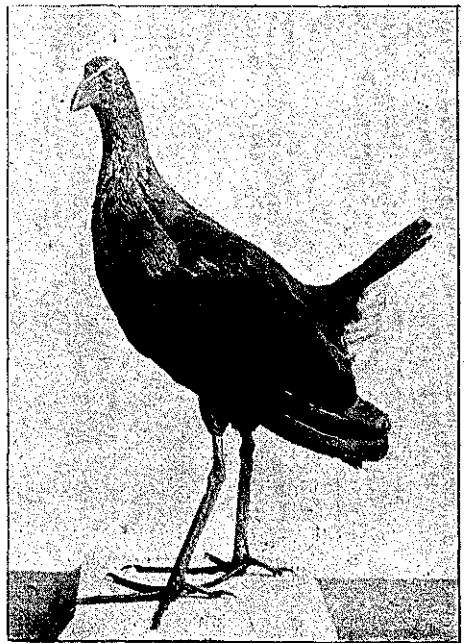
PIWAKAWAKA (FANTAIL).

most numerous. It is to be found in large numbers in every swamp and morass, and is often to be seen in the vicinity of cultivations and on newly-ploughed land. The *Pukeko*, which the Maoris say was one of the birds brought as pets in the canoes from Hawaii, is unlike most other New Zealand birds in that it not only does not decrease, but even increases in settled districts of the colony.

The melancholy bittern, a type of all that is desolate and mournful, is a frequent sight in the swampy country of this land. Where the long *raupo* waves in the wind, and the sharp-edged flax leaves rustle against each other, and the *toi toi* dips its pendant flags in the still pools on the margin of some deep swamp—there is the haunt of the bittern, the *Matuku* of the Maoris. Or say we are pulling down a creek bordered by low swampy banks. As we round a bend, the splash of our oars startles a family party of lively little *Weweeia* or dabchicks, which scurry away into the sedge with a curious flapping motion along the surface of the water as fast as they can get out of sight. A couple of

black shags, or *Kawau*, which have been perched on an old tree-stump, intently contemplating the glassy water on the lookout for their breakfast, rise sulkily at our approach into their domain, and seek another roosting place. Suddenly we come upon the king of the morass, the *Matuku*. A large dingy-coloured bird with brown spots and a long ruffled neck, he stands by the foot of a tuft of *raupo*, in a little placid back-water of the creek, with his long bill pointing heavenwards. Silently he gazes at the intruders, but for a moment; then he rises heavily and wings his steady flight to a more secluded spot where the inquisitive Sons of Tiki will molest him not.

The cry of the bittern is a deep, hollow melancholy note, repeated three times. There is a Maori tradition on the West Coast that when Turi, the chief of the Aotea canoe, left his village at Patea to go to fish or to work on his cultivations, that his enemy might not



PUKEKO (SWAMP-HEN).

be aware of his departure, and also that he might take all his people with him, and not be obliged to leave any behind to guard the *pa*, he placed a *Matuku* or bittern in it, so that