



# OUR NEW ZEALAND BIRDS.



By J. COWAN.

Photographs by A. L. Cleave, taken by kind permission of Mr. T. F. Cheeseman, Curator, from specimens in the Auckland Museum.

## PART II.



Of a race like the Maori, destitute of land-animals, the birds of New Zealand were a most important source of food supply. As we have seen, such birds as the pigeon, *tui* and *kaka* were and are favorite delicacies amongst the native people, but this list by no means exhausts the "game" portion of the Maori's *menu*. The wild duck, the snipe and the mutton-bird, are amongst the principal food-birds of our coasts and rivers, and the great swamps and lagoons of the interior of this Island are frequented in very large numbers by the first mentioned, the *pareva* of the Maoris. Of our sea birds the one of greatest economic value, at any rate to the natives, is the mutton-bird, of which there are several kinds. Two are known as the *titi* and *oii*. The mutton-bird frequents many of the rocky islets on the East Coast of the North Island, and it is found in immense flights on the small islands near Stewart Island, in the far South. Those who want to see teeming bird-life should visit some of the small islands on our coasts, such as the Hen and Chickens, off Whangarei Heads. The feathered fishers are there by tens of thousands—seagulls, divers, puffins, petrels, mutton-birds, penguins—dotting the waters all around, pursuing shoals of fish with shrill screams, or fighting with each other and vociferating clamorously over some ocean delicacy.

The mutton-birds are interesting denizens of these islands, and of Karewa, Mayor Island, and many other similar spots. Their

breeding places are burrows in the sides of the hills, and these residences they share with the *tuatara* lizard, which is a sort of permanent boarder in Titi Villa. The Northern natives term the grey-faced petrel the *oii*, while another petrel is known as the *titi*, and another as the *loanui*. These are all mutton-birds, and are taken by the Maoris for food. The general name for the mutton-bird throughout the colony, however, is *titi*. It is the practice of the natives to resort to certain islands on the New Zealand coast, especially to the small islands in the vicinity of Foveaux Straits, every year at the mutton-birding season, when thousands of these birds are killed, cooked, and packed in air-tight layers of their own fat for future consumption. Birds so preserved are termed *titi huahua*, and they are packed in singular-looking baskets of split kelp, in *totara* bark cases, or in the more prosaic kerosene tin. Many hundreds of these birds are annually distributed by the Southern natives to the tribes in the North, and preserved mutton-birds even come from the far-away Chatham Islands as presents for the prophet Te Whiti, at Parihaka.

The *titi* has a flavour all its own; it is at any rate not at all bird-like. Mr. Boscawen, in a report on the Little Barrier Island, furnished to the Crown Lands and Survey Department some years ago, said of the preserved mutton-bird that "it tastes something like the smell of a blown out oil lamp." Well, all the *titi* are not quite as bad as that. The writer has had *titi huahua* at sundry Maori feasts, and can certify that it is not half bad, providing always that one is