

steep cliffs and causing avalanches. But all the animals have now been cleared from the sanctuary, except opossums and rats, and these are being trapped. Freed of the animals, the bush, especially on the eastern slopes, has recovered quickly. Most of it is second growth, helped by thousands of trees which the Lands Department has planted. But here and there old trees—rata, maire, and matai—huge and gnarled, tell of the vigour and size of the original bush.

As the trees and undergrowth have recovered, the birds have multiplied. "Provide the food and the birds will look after themselves." This has been the maxim the Lands Department has worked under. And if you happen to wake on Kapiti before dawn of any summer day you will agree that the policy has been a wise one. For half an hour, especially after rain, the noise of the birds makes sleep impossible. The bell-birds seem the noisiest of all; there are hundreds of them. Yet if you go outside you quickly find that they are probably only a small proportion of the total bird population. Native pigeons, for instance, soar to a hundred feet and drop in a vertical dive almost to the tree-tops. Or perhaps, like fat balls of green and white and purple, they sit and watch you from branches a few feet away. A very foolish bird, the native pigeon, as Samuel Butler wrote in 1863. "Tie a string with a noose at the end of it



*On Fisherman's Island.*

to a long stick, and you may put it round his neck and catch him." These days, of course, you may do nothing of the sort, since the pigeon, with other native birds, is protected.

Amongst the flax on the flat land are the tuis. Hundreds of them, too, their glossy dark plumage shining with green and purplish metallic reflections. They are drinking the honey of the flax flowers. But they are greedy and jealous, and in quarrelling amongst themselves they take off and perform aerobatics no airman would dare dream of.

Green and red parakeets, white-eyes, white-heads, native cuckoos, and fan-tails—numbers of all these birds contribute their own distinctive notes to the continual chorus. With them, too, is the robin, for one member of which family Butler seemed to have a special affection.

"When one is camping out," he wrote, "no sooner has one lit one's fire than several robins make their appearance, prying into one's whole proceedings with true robin-like impudence. They have never probably seen a fire before and are rather puzzled by it. I heard of one which first lighted on the embers, which were covered with ashes; finding this unpleasant, he hopped on to a burning twig; this was worse, so the third time he lighted on a red-hot coal; whereat, much disgusted, he took himself off, I hope escaping with nothing but a blistered toe. They frequently come into my hut. I watched one hop in a few mornings ago, when the breakfast things



*In Kapiti's bush.*