

TUIS ON THE GUM-TREES

Ere the birds begin singing their gay spring-time song,
When the days are still short, and the nights are still long,
Every gum blossom casts its green cap on the grass
And scatters its scents to the breezes that pass.
Each flower is wafting a message of cheer—
"My table is spread, it is time to be here!
Come rollicking bird, or industrious bee—
There is honey for all in the old bluegum tree!"

Then hurrah for the music, the tuis have come!
Their wild ringing notes drown the bee's drowsy hum—
From the far bushy gullies, on swift black wings borne,
They have flown to the feast in the grey of the morn.
Their chorus of gurgles, and whistles, and trills
The solemn old gum tree with melody fills,
Not a bird in the bush is so merry as they
As they revel and sing thro' the short winter day.

With rich chuckles and fleetings their slim tongues they ply,
And bold is the glance of each dark roving eye—
Not a minah dare tease them, no hawk hovers near—
They are kings of the air, and have nothing to fear.
Swift flights in the sunshine, short rests on the pine,
A clear gleam of white on a black coat so fine;
Then evening notes ripple when darkness has come,
And deep silence and peace wrap the stately old gum.

Now fair Spring's nimble handmaidens spread on her board
The kowhai's rich honey in golden cups stored,
Swiftly forth all her messengers fly on the airs--
"Ho! All you who love nectar come taste of my wares!"
The tuis, remembering the good days of old,
Desert silver chalice for goblet of gold,
They're away to the river-banks shouting in glee
And forsaken and sad stands the old bluegum tree.

H. S. HUTCHINSON.

THE WEKA'S CUNNING

The weka is well known for its extreme inquisitiveness; and one is reported as walking right into a police station in the Taranaki district. But the weka is also a very wise bird, and maybe this individual was taking no risks under our conservation laws.