

## CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The first competition under the auspices of the New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society for a prize of £5 was won by Miss Joan Berry, of Ngapotiki. The essays on any chosen native bird were numerous, emanating from all parts of the Dominion, and even as far away as Chatham Islands. Mrs. Moncrieff, of Nelson, who judged the essays for us, writes:—"It was most delightful reading these essays, and I only wish I could give many more prizes. I am sure it should put a grown-up person to shame to read the remarks on the lack of bird protection, and it was most delightful to read such remarks as: 'Fancy a world without birds, what a cheerless place it would be. How lovely it is in the country, besides a running stream with the blue sky above and the trees giving their shade, to lie and listen to the sweet songs of the birds on every side. It is the sweetest music in the world.'"

### REDBILLS.

*(Winning Essay by MISS JOAN BERRY.)*

Our native redbills are fairly tame birds. They are about the size of a pigeon, but are shorter and fatter in stature. Their plumage is black, but white feathers are visible under the wings when the birds are in flight. They have short tails, red eyes, long red legs, and very long red bills. Their legs are not quite such a bright colour as their bills. They haunt lonely sea-coasts, but are unable to swim, as they have not webbed feet. Their call resembles that of a paradise duck about to rise from the ground, with the addition of one shrill note on the end. When calling, redbills usually stand on one leg, bob their heads up and down, opening their bills wide at every note. They are poor fliers, rarely rising more than a few feet from the ground, and never flying very far at a time. Their usual way of progress is a little quick run with which they advance very swiftly. When running away from anything, redbills hold their heads down. Their chief food is small insects, found in seaweed, although I have often watched them standing on a rock in about six inches of water and securing small fish from the incoming tide. They often sleep, standing on one leg, during the day. I think the redbills here sleep on some rocks on the end of a point at night. They usually go about in pairs.

They nest early in December, generally selecting a bleak spot near the sea. I once watched a female redbill making a nest in the pebbles. She turned round in a circle, beating the sand into place with her wings until a shallow hole was formed. Redbills lay from two to three greenish brown eggs, blotched with black and brown. They are about the size of hens' eggs, but are more the shape of turkeys'. The eggs take three weeks to hatch, and