

OUR DISAPPEARING GAME BIRDS.

Mr. W. J. Belcher, writing from Suva, Fiji, where he now resides, of the "good old days" remarks: "The Wairarapa Lake was in those days a paradise for water-fowl, but I well remember the disgraceful slaughter of the Black Swan. Frequent terrific gales of wind swept across the lake; and the swans in vast flocks left the rough water and walked across the fields. Owing to the force of the wind the helpless heavy birds could not rise. To their everlasting shame, the settlers went amongst the great flocks armed with heavy clubs, and the poor innocents were simply struck on the heads and slaughtered in thousands. The feathers were shorn off with the old-time sheep shears, stuffed into sacks and sold for bedding, pillows, etc. The great piles of carcasses were fed to the pigs. Conditions seem bad to-day, as regards the slaughter of the native wild duck. It is saddening to see the so-called "sportsmen" photographed for the illustrated papers, with their heavy bags of duck, swan and pukeko. A competition appears to exist during the first week of the shooting season, as to who can be photographed with the greatest number of slain birds. The publication of such boastful photographs should be discouraged.

"Now that there is nothing much else to shoot in New Zealand, so far as game birds are concerned, the advertising of large bags will only assist the inevitable result—the lessening or perhaps disappearance of water fowl altogether.



KAKA IN TYPICAL ATTITUDE.

[Photo—J. Patison.]