

BELLBIRD (Potts.)—"It is at the grey break of dawn, and in the still hour that closes in the day, that its chimes strike clearest on the ear. It is comparatively silent during the noon-tide heat, unless some few individuals meet on a tree or shrub that offers, it may be, a tempting show of honey-bearing blossoms, a note or two is briefly sounded, the numbers rapidly increase, after much noisy fluttering of wings a gush of clanging melody bursts forth from a score of quivering throats, forming a concert of inharmonious, yet most pleasing sounds. Nor is the ear alone gratified, for the actions and postures of the melodists are extremely quaint and droll during this performance, which seems to be only undertaken by cock birds; it is usually commenced by two of them that perch opposite to each other, now with swelling throat and puffed out feathers they deliver note for note with curious precision of time and swaying action.

"Probably Cook indicated the bell-bird, then in a comparatively unmolested state, when he wrote 'the ship lay at the distance of somewhat less than a quarter of a mile from the shore, and in the morning we were awakened by the singing of the birds; the number was incredible, and they seemed to strain their throats in emulation of each other. This wild melody was infinitely superior to any that we had ever heard of the same kind; it seemed to be like small bells, most exquisitely tuned, and perhaps the distance and the water between might be of no small advantage to the sound.'

"This cheerful bird does not confine itself to forests and their deep and gloomy shades, it rather affects shrubby gullies, and is a constant and well loved inmate of our gardens and plantations, and vastly doth it delight in ransacking the sweets yielded by the blossoms of the acacia, fuchsia, tritoma, etc. The berries of the *konini*, of various species of coprosma, ripening early, furnish some part of its food supply, later on in the year the bead-like seeds of the ti palm are laid under contribution. . . .

"Placed among the *Meliphagidae* or honey-eaters by ornithologists, it nevertheless shows an accommodating appetite for many kinds of food. We have already pointed to some of the numerous kinds of drupes and berries on which it luxuriates; yet as an insect eater it is not without its value to the culturist; in twisting and turning amongst the leaves, as spray by spray it searches for the living hordes housed in barky crevices, it exhibits habits and ways that may be likened to those of a true creeper. In dull foggy weather we well remember to have seen numbers of this bird twirling and climbing about the rampant intertwined cords of the *muhlenbeckia* that hung almost from the very top of a lofty tree—here the bellbirds were most busy in their insect search, fluttering with half spread wings and swaying on the slender lians that hung pendant from the outspread branches. After moths and large insects on the wing we have often seen it