

## "SHALL WE DO IT?"

(By CAPT. E. V. SANDERSON.)

Mr. A. H. Gibson, J.P., writes a very interesting description of the early days in Akatarawa Valley (about 25 miles from Wellington) as it existed in 1884.

"I was the only settler living in the valley at that time. True, there were one or two whares, but they were uninhabited. It was a lonely valley right in the heart of the bush, but beautiful as only New Zealand's unspoiled beauty is. Mine was a two-roomed whare on Section 389, which had about 50 acres cleared and in grass. I slept in a hammock slung to the wall-plates. Have you ever slept alone in the bush miles from anyone? If not, then you don't know how our far-off ancestors lived long before towns were invented. The sighing of the breeze among the pine-tops, the distant murmur of the river, the call of the weka or the morepork, and then when the winter gales blow, afar off the crash of some mighty monarch of the forest as he falls to the earth from which he sprang hundreds of years ago. And then the coming of the dawn; a note from a distant tui on some branch in the forest quickly answered by another close by; a kaka's shrill cry from the big rata on the opposite hill; then a whole chorus in which tuis, kakas and bell-birds join, mingled with the first morning breath of the breeze from up the river. And now a shaft of sunshine strikes over the hill to the east and lights on the tasselled tops of the rimu, where already pigeons are wheeling, their white and bronze breasts gleaming against the blue sky. In the elbow of the river, just where the water glides under an overhanging tree-fern, a blue mountain duck with her brood of young is paddling up stream. And now the huias call from over the river where the rangiora is in full bloom, and the old hinau rears its worm-eaten boughs on high. Some parraquets are chattering in the honeysuckle, whose red blossoms hold that nectar they so love, and on the very top of the dead pine in the clearing perches a bush-hawk. The kakas in a body of some 20 or 30, screaming loudly, wheel round the crimson rata, in whose wide-spreading boughs they sleep every night, preparatory to flying far over the bush-ranges to other feeding-grounds. A warm scented breath from the heart of the bush steals on the ambient air. Day has begun on the Akatarawa Valley. . . .

Often I would go eeling up the river with a bob made of interlaced worms dug from the garden. It is dark and muddy on the river bed. Great trees loom up on either bank, dark and mysterious. All sorts of noises come from the