

## BUSH AND BIRD LIFE.

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By JAMES COWAN.

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Between the two destructive agents in the forests, the bush-feller and the introduced animals, New Zealand's bush regions are in the gravest danger and are gradually but surely being robbed of their original character of beauty and teeming bird life. This complaint has been made again and again by those who have regard for the preservation of the forest and its value as a protective covering for the land, but it is apparently almost hopeless to rouse the governing authorities of the country to a sense of the urgent need for control and preventive measures. The Urewera Country is only one of many places where immediate care for the standing forest is necessary, not merely in the interest of landscape beauty, but for the sake of the very life of the land. All over this island more and more bush is coming down; there is not only unnecessary timber felling for commercial purposes, but there is absolutely wasteful destruction. There are vast quantities of milled timber on hand; yet we continually hear of more areas being marked for milling, and there is always the excuse of settlement needs for the backblocks man who likes to see "a good burn."

When the vehicle road was put through the Urewera Country there were those of us who knew that district in its original condition who saw in that road the beginning of the ruin of the forests which should be regarded as a precious sanctuary. Now the fate of that glorious bush and mountain region hangs in the balance. The only method by which the bush which clothes those ranges can be saved is for the State to acquire the rights and compensate the Maori owners. Commercially, that forest is of comparatively small value. If it is felled it will only be burned, for the futile sake of grassing a place which Nature never intended to be stripped of its trees; and is New Zealand to suffer such criminal destruction without an effort to prevent it? The time has come when a forest, whether on Crown or privately-owned land, must be regarded as a national possession. Legislation to that end is an urgent need. Man is his brother's keeper here; and every owner of bush land has an obligation to the country. The State must step in, as it has in other countries, and prevent land owners from destroying forest which conserves water supply, prevents disastrous floods, serves as a shelter, holds the soil together, acts as a shield of beauty for the land. This applies not merely to the Urewera, but to the whole country.