

alighted upon Lord Grey's hat. There he stood happily. A minute or two later two other mandarins also flew up and settled on the back of the seat, one on either side of the statesman, and perhaps a couple of feet from him. The picture they made was a very remarkable one; they appeared to be acting as a bodyguard, and the bright sunshine heightened their beauty. After a time one of the three mandarins actually went to sleep.

"Two instances of the remarkable confidence which exists at Fallodon between man and birds may be mentioned. It is well known how reluctant birds are to disclose their nesting place to human eyes. A tufted duck here actually rose from her eggs, covered them with the down of the nest, and then came up to be fed, all while the human observer was standing close beside her. The second occurrence is even more remarkable. One day the gardener saw a mandarin duck very perturbed. She came up to him, plainly imploring his aid, and led him, as a dog might have done, for some distance along the side of one of the ponds, now and again looking back at him encouragingly. After a time she stopped, and the gardener saw that one of her ducklings was entangled in some wire. While he was liberating the duckling the mother stood beside him, showing marked approval, and when the good work had been successfully completed she thanked him as plainly as it is possible for a duck to thank a human being. This action shows, I think, the intelligence of the mandarin duck, and is a tribute to the family atmosphere of the Fallodon sanctuary."

Some New Zealanders, by similar kindness to wild birds, have also won their confidence. The way is open for anybody to build a firm friendship with charming birds.

SEAGULLS HELP FARMERS.

Seagulls are usually regarded as fisher-birds, but now and again they penetrate inland and feed on almost anything that comes in their way (remarks a contributor to "Smith's Weekly," Sydney).

During a caterpillar plague at Tilba Tilba (N.S.W.), thousands of gulls appeared in the paddocks, and gorged day after day on the pest. Many of the farms in the locality were saved by the birds destroying the crawling hordes before they could reach the crops. The gulls walked and fluttered about the ground until their crops were full, and then retired to a swamp or waterhole.

When the caterpillars had disappeared the birds left.

Similarly, in many districts of New Zealand, seagulls have waged war on insects and grubs that worry farmers.