

VERY FRIENDLY ROBINS.

Birds of Paradise.

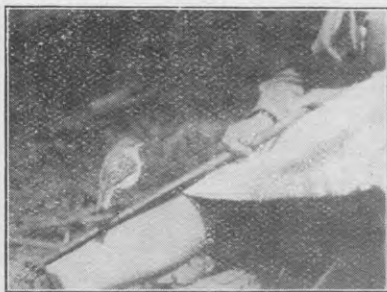
(By H.K.D.)

Would you make friends with the friendliest little birds of our New Zealand bush? Then when next Christmas holidays come round, why not go to board or camp at Paradise, at the head of Lake Whakatipu?

In January last some of the happiest half hours our party spent were with the robins in the back forest there. On a sunny morning, with biscuits in our pockets, we would wander quietly, sometimes singly, sometimes in pairs, into the bush beyond the cottage garden. Presently, we would hear the clear shrill whistle of a robin somewhere near. We would at once settle ourselves on a fallen log or sunny slope, scratch up the dead beech leaves beside us to uncover some grubs or insects, and by whistling or other forms of invitation, attract the bird toward us.

The biscuit crumbs usually brought him within a yard or two. Then his inquisitiveness did the rest. He would hop all round us and peck the buttons or laces on our shoes, the worsted of our stockings, the brown speckles on our coat. Sometimes he even hopped up our legs, on to our laps and actually pecked our finger nails. Billies, tin-openers, bangles — anything bright — was sure to

attract his attention. Four of us had cameras, and we vied with one another in taking snaps of him at close range. The most successful one shows very clearly his long black legs and beady eyes.



MR. ROBIN SAYS "GOOD MORNING!"

Sometimes a second robin appeared close at hand, but our first friend usually regarded him as an intruder to be promptly sent about his business. The first would presently return to us, still hissing out his anger. My companion on such occasions was a lively young schoolgirl of nine; but even she had no difficulty in sitting quietly, and she marvelled at the ways of these trusting creatures of the bush.

I feel sure that the memory of the gentle friendly robins will draw us back again to the glorious valleys of the Dart and Rees, to Diamond Lake and Paradise.