

BELLBIRDS AND A FLAUTIST.

Here is an interesting letter from Mr. D. Roberts, Gowan Bridge, Nelson, to the Forest and Bird Protection Society:—

"I live in a mountainous locality near Murchison, where there are, I am glad to say, large areas of beech forest remaining on the rough country.

"My two hobbies are scrambling about in the bush and playing the flute. On a recent week-end I was out tramping, and happened to have my flute in my swag, as I intended visiting some friends that evening. When I reached the summit of a mountain, I sat down on a tree trunk to rest, and brought out my flute and began to play. Almost immediately two or three bellbirds appeared in a beech close by and began to sing strongly. In a few minutes I had at least a dozen of these beautiful green birds about me, moving about restlessly and filling the air with their crisp silver notes.

"At first the humorous side of the thing struck me most forcibly, so that I could not play for laughing; but then I entered into the spirit of it, and went on playing for about a quarter of an hour, while my bird friends continued to flutter and whistle.

"This mountain is more than 3,000 feet high. Of course, I will not venture to answer for the birds' attitude. Whether they came to listen to me, or were trying to drown my music with their own, or were merely expressing a melodious variety of indignation at my intrusion, it is not for me to say. If it was the first, I bow to them for the compliment; if it was the second, I won; and if it was the third, I think it is a pity that other people cannot learn to be angry so charmingly. In any case, those few minutes on that forested mountain-top will always be a pleasant memory to me.

"I frequently see these birds, and others, round about—tuis, bellbirds, warblers, riflemen, robins, tomtits, keas, grey ducks and paradise ducks, parrakeets, pigeons and kakas, and very rarely a weka, and cuckoos in season."

In reply to Mr. Roberts, Captain E. V. Sanderson, President of the Society, remarks:—

"Bellbirds and others are prone to show their apparent resentment at any bird-like call. I have always looked upon this trait as a fear on their part that some competitor might be trespassing on their particular feeding area. They act just in the way you describe when many other noises both musical and unmusical are made, and yet perhaps have no idea of music as we know it."