

LET BIRDS BE FREE.

Famous John Buchan's Plea.

Canada's new Governor-General, the famous John Buchan (well known as a novelist to many New Zealanders) is a warm lover of birds. Here is part of the eloquent plea he made for the freedom of birds to a committee of the British House of Commons:—

"A bird in a cage is an atrocity. I believe it is cruel to keep any wild thing used to the freedom and happiness of its natural life in captivity. Evidence shows there is actual cruelty involved in the catching and caging of birds.

"Birds are one of the chief amenities of rural English life. The wholesale, unrestricted catching of them has undoubtedly depleted certain areas.

"The abolition of an abominable form of cruelty and the preservation of one of the chief amenities of the countryside are cheaply purchased at the cost of a few hard cases (the comparatively small number of bird-dealers and fanciers)."

BELL-BIRDS AND BLOW-FLIES.

A correspondent of the Forest and Bird Protection Society tells of an incident which supports a statement of the well-known naturalist, William Potts, in his "Out in the Open" (1882), that the fancy of bell-birds sometimes turns to food which is usually supposed to be outside their dietary.

While waiting at Bluecliffs for the arrival of the boat from Port Craig, the actions of a pair of bell-birds attracted my attention (the writer remarks). A piece of deerskin, lying in front of the hut, was swarming with blow-flies, and the birds (a cock and a hen) were industriously catching these insects and flying away to the bush.

As they were obviously feeding their young, I followed, and soon found the nest in the top of a tall pepper-bush.

I timed the trips of the birds, and they averaged five trips each in four minutes, each with not one or two flies, but as many as their little beaks could hold. When I left an hour later they were "still going strong." Evidently the family liked the "blue-bottles."