

## THE COLLECTOR'S TOLL

IT FALLS ON THE RARE SPECIES.

WHEN Parliament and the Government put a cordon of absolute protection round most of the New Zealand birds, a hole was left in the fence. The hole is called collectors' permits.

While other people who take birds or eggs or nests are law-breakers acting at their own risk, a collector with a permit has a legal exemption. It is true that he remains on the side of the law only so long as he observes the restrictions in his permit limiting the species and numbers that he may take. But he is in a better position, than is the ordinary law-breaker, to violate the Act, because the permit shields him. He may exceed it with more immunity than would be enjoyed by a man who collects without a permit, because the unpermitted person is clearly in the wrong from the jump.

### SUPERVISION IS NECESSARY.

Any person desirous of taking birds or eggs for which no permit is obtainable could do so more safely if he possessed a permit covering other birds and eggs than if he possessed no permit at all.

This being so, an administering authority charged with the trust of bird protection must of necessity look with jealousy on every permit it issues. A permit in itself is a double-edged weapon. The personal factor of the collector may count, but cannot alter in fact that a bird-collector with a permit is a person whose scrupulous observance of permit-conditions cannot be taken for granted.

The most eminent and favourable bird-collector is no more entitled to pass without scrutiny than an eminent accountant is entitled to escape the audit.

### VIGILANT RANGING IN CANADA.

In Canada a collector is accompanied by a ranger, or the birds are collected for him by the authorities. In New Zealand he collects under no constant Government supervision. His honour is relied on. But it is not fair to collectors that their honour should be relied on, nor is it fair to the birds.

No doubt it will be objected that the cost of sending a ranger or supervisor to see that a permit is complied with would be too great. It is too great when permits are too freely granted. The remedy is to reduce permits to cases of special scientific merit. The number of these is not so great as to make supervision too cumbersome or too expensive. Moreover, why should not the person or organisation that secures advantage from the permit pay for the cost of the supervision?

Not every proposal to gather specimens to exchange for foreign specimens should be granted, whether in the name of public interest, or private interest, or scientific inquiry. No one should be allowed to assume that a permit is to be taken for granted.

### A TRAFFIC IN PROTECTED BIRDS.

Bird skins, birds' eggs, etc., have a scientific exchange value and a money exchange value. That there is a traffic resting on money is indicated by the fact that New Zealand protected birds, including parakeets, can be bought in Sydney; and Australian protected birds can be bought in New Zealand. To say that, is not to say that they were taken on collectors' permits. But it is a reason for specially supervising collectors and for reducing their permits to a minimum.

Someone may retort: "But poachers without

*Young Bellbirds.*

[Photo. by courtesy Edgar F. Stead.]

