

permits take and sell a hundred birds for every dozen taken, legally or illegally, by collectors."

Even if this be true, the collector's proportion of responsibility is not merely the proportion of birds he takes to the aggregate of birds taken. The collector is proportionately a much more dangerous factor, because, in his operations among protected New Zealand birds, he is attracted irresistibly to those that are fewest, rarest, and most in demand. A huia (if there is one) is in more danger from one collector than from all the pigeon pot-hunters in New Zealand, who probably number hundreds.

The collector is dangerous because he is concerned with the weakest link in the chain of bird life, such a link as is represented by a rare and near-passing species.

NO HELP FOR PRIVATE COLLECTIONS.

No collector should be turned out with a permit in the haunts of the rarest species and treated as an honourable man. If he be an honourable man, he will not expect to be taken on trust. Because he will know that not everybody can be taken on trust, and that there should be uniformity of treatment.

The keynote of Government policy should be no more help for private collections, and ex-

treme strictness in collecting for museum and public purposes.

The ramifications of commercial collecting and the taxidermist business would be brought to light if the Government gave half as much attention to the bird-skin traffic as it gives to opossum-skins.

The mentality of the museum activities may be scientific; but the mentality of private activities is not scientific, and in most cases is purely commercial. No scientist is on the edge of a discovery that is held up for lack of the skin or the egg of a bird.

THE ATTACK ON RARE BIRDS.

The general law-breaking pothunter is impressive, because of the numbers of birds he takes, but the scarcity of birds of a species tends to discourage him. The same scarcity whets the collector's interest. His share in the problem is not numerical, but relative, not a matter of quantity, but of quality. If the Government is minded to create a staff of rangers under the Department of Internal Affairs, supervision of permits should be its first duty. If the Government is not so minded, it should seriously consider whether it is warranted in granting collecting permits at all.

NOT ROMANTIC, MERELY CRUEL

Is nest-robbing by boys a peculiarly English institution? Do the English-speaking boys compare unfavourably with Continental boys in respect for the breeding bird?

One would be very unwilling to answer Yes to that question. And yet! Well, read what E. M. Nicholson has to say in his book, "Birds in England."

When the British Army was in occupation of part of Germany after the Great War, Mr. Nicholson spent two seasons there, and kept nests under observation.

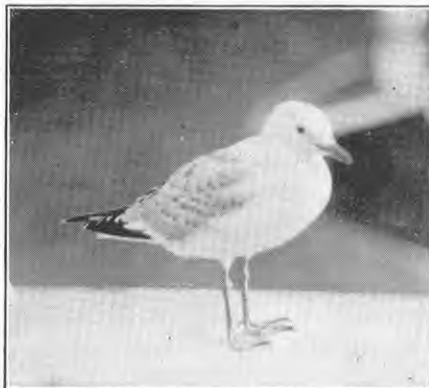
They were robbed of eggs. But who did it? He writes:—

"One afternoon, quite late in the season, I learned the cause. I had just left a third icterine warbler's nest when I found myself in the midst of a gang of ragged, merry-faced urchins, who were talking English as I

approached, but (taking me for a German) besieged me clamorously with the question: 'Haben sie eier?' I disclaimed all knowledge of eggs, but I knew now what had happened to my precious nests. Within a quarter of a mile of the wood were the married quarters of a large part of the British Army of the Rhine; these were the younger generation of the colony developing true to type in an alien environment.

"Bird-nesting among children seems, in fact, to be a peculiarly English instinct. Abroad it is different. There little is done for sport, though much with some other motive—food, cruelty, and the rest."

But bird-nesting, however instinctive in boys, is always cruelty. Cannot schoolmasters and scoutmasters present it in its cruel, unsporting light and take the false romance out of it?



Red Billed Gull.