

## BIRD FACES FIRING SQUAD.

### MR. PARRY, THE GREY DUCK, AND CULTURE.

"NO other countries," writes Eric Hardy in "Contemporary Review," "take such pains over their bird-life as do the Anglo-Saxons."

Now, is this true? Do the Anglo-Saxons (that is to say, the people of Britain and the Dominions, and the people of English-speaking North America) lead the world in protection of bird-life? One would like to answer "Yes" to that question, because bird-protection (when real and not a pretence) is a sign of human culture. And we all like to think that we are a cultured people.

We in New Zealand particularly like to think that we are more than usually cultured. Some of us also say that politically we lead the world. But can we say (except with our tongue in our cheek) that we lead the world in bird-protection?

#### UTAH'S SANCTUARY EXAMPLE.

Probably the "Contemporary Review" writer was never in New Zealand. If he came here and if he found out all about the species we have lost, and the species that are in danger, and the pigeon-poaching that some parts of New Zealand are almost proud of, it is doubtful whether he would include New Zealanders among those Anglo-Saxons whose bird-consciousness he praises.

For instance, could he pay us any compliment whatever for our treatment—past and present—of the grey duck? This magnificent native bird carries the gunners and the Acclimatisation Societies on his back, and they are killing him as surely as the Americans of fifty years ago killed their game species. But there is the difference—while the gospel of bird-protection has at last reached the Americans and other English-speaking peoples, that gospel has so little penetrated New Zealanders that, even in this year of grace 1938, it is carrying to the grey duck no real help. The grey duck has his back to the wall. But there is no Government in New Zealand courageous enough to call off the firing squad permanently; or alternatively, to

provide the grey duck with sanctuaries in the land that was his long before the white man reached it.

The remedy is being pointed out to us in Utah, the American territory that erected a monument at Salt Lake City to the gulls that saved the pioneers' crops from insect attack, incidentally saving the lives of the early Utah settlers. It is fitting that Utah should utilise for a wildfowl sanctuary its alkaline wastes. And it is to be hoped that readers of the February issue of "Forest and Bird" will have read the article on Utah sanctuary measures in the light of an example to New Zealand.

#### WATER-FOWL AND WASTE LANDS.

A Government survey of waste or almost worthless areas containing swamps suitable for water-fowl sanctuaries would almost certainly reveal that—without any serious or costly expropriation of private land—a chain of such sanctuaries could be established throughout New Zealand. "The small administrative staff" mentioned in the Utah article would of course be required. The sanctuaries would cost something in up-keep, even if it cost little to acquire the areas. And it is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact that money would have to be spent. But if taxation is to be so heavily and permanently increased in New Zealand as the figures of recent years reveal, why not expend some of the money in bird-culture, which, as shown above, is taken to be evidence of human culture? New Zealand is not leading the world when she can spend so many extra millions in railwaying and roading the back-country, bringing motor cars and guns into the haunts of wild-life, and yet cannot spend anything on bird sanctuaries, and very little on rangers. Probably in the whole of New Zealand there are not more than ten paid rangers.

The alleged ascendancy of Anglo-Saxons in bird-consciousness may or may not be a fact, but New Zealand's cultural contribution to it is poor indeed.