

## REPRISALS SENTENCE.

### THREE OLD NEW ZEALANDERS FOUND GUILTY.

Three alleged criminals were placed in the dock the other morning in the greatest wooden building in the world.

They were Mr. Glossy Blue Pukeko, charged with having a preference for damp and muddy places, and with having on one occasion damaged a farmer's haystack; Mr. Sharp Bill Shag, charged with espionage from tree-tops, and with having eaten one trout, seven bullies, and five hundred eels; and Mr. Gaunt and Hungry Harrier, charged with being of wandering habits, and with having assaulted a tame pheasant released from the Acclimatisation Society's game farm two days before May 1st.

The three accused were unable to plead. Their silence was regarded as obstinacy, and therefore as a point against them.

The Judge said that the case presented no difficulty whatever. There was not, against any of the accused, the slightest bit of evidence that would bear scientific analysis. No biological investigation, yielding positive proof of guilt, had ever been made; in fact, many years ago one of the accused, Mr. Glossy Bill Pukeko, had earned a favourable verdict from a near-scientific investigation conducted by his own Department. But this near-scientific evidence was completely outweighed by the whispering campaign that met him in every country district and at every gun-club meeting. A salient fact was that the collection of whispered evidence from farmers and gun-clubs cost nothing, whereas a really scientific investigation would cost a good deal, and already there was hardly enough money for the pheasant-breeding. All things considered, added the Judge, it was clear that he would be failing in his duty if he failed to convict the three accused, and to sanction the sharpest reprisals by the sportsmen of New Zealand against a bird that preferred to live in vile muddy swamps, and another bird that perched statuesque and Satan-like on tree-tops, and yet another bird that had a slovenly way of flying around fields as if it were up to no good.

The death sentence pronounced by the Judge was received in silence, except for a slight rustle

of paper as one of the clerks of the Court scribbled the sentence-record on the top of the file. Somewhere on the same file is the Department's endorsement of the pukeko's right to live, but it will stop where it is, and the file will return to the archives of the greatest wooden building in the world.

When the clerk came to record the history and antecedents of the accused, he found that they were older inhabitants of New Zealand than anybody in the great wooden building. The accused are all New Zealanders. This might have been a factor in their favour, but for their continued obstinate silence, which almost amounted to contempt of Court, and which rendered impossible any plan to secure a confession by the latest Moscow methods.

### *A Visitor's Impression.*

Mr. Sidney Porter, an English ornithologist, who recently visited this country, writes to the Forest and Bird Protection Society as follows:—

I am now here again for a short time and there is a matter I would like to mention. When I was here last I stayed for a time in the King Country, and was taken out by a friend to see the forests which were being worked by the timber company. This company has the lease or owns tens of thousands of acres of the most magnificent forest country in New Zealand, which they are milling. This would not be so bad if it were only milled, but as soon as the very large timber is cut out the whole area is fired, often in parts far too steep for any farming, and which in a few years will erode. When I questioned them on the matter of firing the forest, I was told it was customary! I have recently seen the person who took me down to the forests, and he says that this terrible desecration is still going on, and vast areas are still being burnt. Can't something be done to stop this awful destruction of the forests by burning? Cutting the large timber out doesn't do a great deal of damage, because it can grow up again, but I should have thought there was enough desolation here already without creating more.