

RAINCLIFF PIONEER PARK

(By L. W. McCaskill.)

ONE of the outstanding Centennial gifts to the people of New Zealand is a magnificent area of bush at Raincliff, South Canterbury, which has been set aside as a memorial to the pioneers by Major P. H. Johnson. As very little of the original mixed rain forest now remains in Canterbury, this gift of bush, the worth of which is enhanced by its being easily accessible from all the centres of population, is especially valuable.

The present bush area comprises over 200 acres of dense vegetation, but adjoining the bush is a large area of manuka shrub-land in which native trees of all kinds are rapidly overtopping the manuka. Stock-proof fencing shortly to be erected will hasten this extension of the main forest. The dominant tree is white pine or kahikatea; there are hundreds of them, tall, straight and clean. A recent estimate showed that there were over 2,000,000 feet of timber in the white pines alone. Other

big trees are totara, matai, and pokaka, some of them truly noble specimens. In addition there are over forty species of broad-leaved trees and shrubs typical of mixed Canterbury rain forest. Remarkably few exotics occur, and these are mainly on the outskirts where they could easily be eradicated.

Bird life is abundant, surprisingly so for such an isolated area. Bellbirds are numerous, so are fantails, waxeyes, warblers, riflemen and tomtits. A few pigeons and moreporks appear to be permanent residents, and it is believed that robins still exist in an almost impenetrable area in the heart of the bush.

Plans envisaged by Major Johnson involve further acquisitions which would bring the total area reserved to nearly 1,000 acres. With public access confined mainly to the outskirts it would appear that we have in sight the preservation of one more area where some of our bush birds will find permanent protection.

A SCENE IN RAINCLIFF PIONEER PARK.

Photo L. W. McCaskill.

