

fury at the unheeding hawk so complacently enjoying his poached meal.

A few days later one of a dozen pullets was missing. Promptly everyone blamed "Old Harrier," and soon was heard that time-worn cry "Chicken Thief." A positively damning statement! I knew full well that unless I could prove the hawk's innocence, and, what was more, do so quickly, the old fellow would haunt that farmstead no more. "Why!" exclaimed the boss suddenly "there is the old varmint now—out there on the hillside, and he is eating something . . . bet it is my pullet." Together we went to investigate. As we drew near the hawk flew off. With considerable relief I saw no sign of feathers. (The boss's threats en route had been singularly blood-thirsty). Something white lay on the ground, and for a horrible moment I feared that it might be an egg. But my fears were groundless. "Old Harrier" had not let me down. The "something white" was nothing more or less than the white front of a stoat! I shall never forget the boss's words as we examined the gory remains. "Well I'm blessed! The old cannibal. Fancy him eating THAT!" I think "Old Harrier's" life-long safety—from the hands of the boss at least—was assured from the moment of my discovering the pullet, minus half its head, dragged under a rotting log.

Another observation concerning "Old Harrier" is worth relating. The world over hawks are known by sportsmen as notorious game-bird killers, and the big New Zealand harrier hawk comes in for more than his fair share of

this unjust accusation. Now, it so chanced that I had been keeping a close watch on "Old Harrier's" home life. I noted the time the three eggs took in hatching, and, later, assisted with odd chunks of meat in the raising of the yellow-eyed husky youngsters. One morning while wading through the big tussocks surrounding the nest, a grey duck flapped wildly forth from beneath my feet. There was a nest there containing a dozen or more eggs. I didn't look too closely for fear the mother duck would not return to her brooding. But, this is the point: if the harrier hawks carry out the ruthless destruction alleged against game-birds in general, why did that duck make her nest scarcely a chain distant from that of "Old Harrier?" Proof that the hawk had nested prior to the grey duck was shown in his almost fully fledged family against the other's unhatched eggs. That the big clumsy harrier hawks do obtain odd game-birds is beyond dispute. Nine times out of ten, however, the captured victims are those which have escaped the dogs after being wounded by sportsmen's guns.

So . . . "Old Harrier" lives on. His "scrub-bush" is squashed flat with constant use. Almost every morning his chuckling music can be heard. Whether this singing is unique in "Old Harrier" I do not know, for he is the only one of his kind I have ever had the opportunity of studying closely. But sing he does. And why shouldn't he? For no one molests him.

HARRIER CHICKS.

[Photo: Thos. M. Wainwright.

