

party on Secretary Island; again the skin was secured by Mr. Mantell and forwarded to the British Museum.

Long years of silence now intervened, thirty years had passed, and in the midst of the regrets of the scientific world that this extraordinary and interesting bird should have become extinct without a fuller investigation having been made of its life history, reports broke into circulation that another specimen had been taken, this time on the upper reaches of the Mararoa River, in the Lake Te Anau district. This was in the year 1870. The capture was made by a rabbit's dog. The bones and skin were preserved, sent abroad, and purchased by the Dresden Museum authorities for the sum of £110. This specimen created the widest interest in Europe. Ornitho-

logists from all parts of the Continent paid hurried visits to the museum to inspect and examine this rare species. Many papers were written and read by eminent ornithologists and biologists before the most important scientific organisations of the Old World, and not the least among these was the paper read by Sir Richard Owen, who, thirty-five years previously, wrote up the accurate history of this lonely bird from fragments of fossil bones.

It was Dr. Meyer, a famous Hungarian biologist who, after a close examination of the specimen in the Dresden Museum, declared it to be a distinct species from the extinct North Island bird, and renamed it *Notornis Hochstetteri*.

A further long silence and no tidings of the takahe were reported.

Twenty years passed, and it was now thought that the mysterious takahe had vanished for ever. Then suddenly much excitement was caused by the report of a capture, again in the Lake Te Anau district. This was in the year 1898. A dog owned by Ross Bros., who were camped at the lake, ran the bird to earth one evening at dusk. Immediately realising the value of their prize the lads hurried off with it to Dunedin. Press cablegrams were flashed over the world bearing the tidings of the capture of another specimen of the rarest of rare birds.

Bidding for the specimen from overseas museums and collectors commenced the following morning, but New Zealand ornithologists were determined that this specimen would not leave the country. Foreign bidding, however, was so persistent and so high that it cost £300 to retain the specimen in New Zealand; this amount was eventually paid by the Government and the bird was placed in the Dunedin Museum, where it may be seen at the present time. This bird, however, is not a particularly fine specimen. It is a young, undersized female with an immature plumage.

This specimen was immediately handed over to Dr. Benham, at that time Professor of Biology at Otago University, and this is the only instance of a scientific examination of the bird having been made. Professor Benham made drawings of every section of the bird's anatomy and forwarded them with his detailed report of his examinations and findings to the Zoological Society, and these are embodied in the society's proceedings. He also read a paper before the Otago Institute, and this paper is embodied in the "Transactions of The New Zealand Institute."

Since the capture of this specimen, away back in 1898, nothing further has been reported, now thirty-one years of silence. Yet we hope and believe the takahe still lives away back in the dense secluded valleys of that vast rugged expanse of practically unknown country in the south-west of New Zealand.

The four specimens that I have referred to provide the only official records that such a bird lived in New Zealand during the past century. There is still, however, yet another record, though without official confirmation, as the specimen was merely used for what it was worth to the soup-pot, no examination of any part of it having been made. Some four years ago when writing on this subject my reference came under the notice of the late Mr. T. Murphy, of South Westland, who was at that time in his eighty-fourth year. Mr. Murphy, who was a keen observer, was so impressed with the description of the bird that he wrote to say that an identical bird came into his possession many years ago. Away back in the 1870's he was employed with a survey party in the Okarito district, South Westland. The party were camped on the borders of the great Okarito lagoon. One evening at dusk the camp dog arrived home dragging a huge bird, which they named a swamp turkey. The members of the party were deeply interested in this rare inhabitant of the swamp, but no attempt was made to preserve the skin or bones and a complete record was lost, but I have no doubt that this "swamp turkey," captured on the Okarito swamp, was another lonely specimen of this scattered species.

Radio Picture Service

Between London and New York

THE trans-Atlantic service for the transmission of facsimile pictures between New York and London has recently been greatly improved. New equipment has replaced the apparatus which has been in use for the last three years, thus speeding up the service and making possible a substantial reduction in the rate of charge.

The new equipment is much more compact than the old type, and offers the advantage of working directly from the original pictures submitted for transmission, without the necessity of photographic copying. The facsimiles are transmitted on high frequencies by a method similar to that used on the Continent for broadcasting "still-pictures."

At the receiving end, the operations have now been smoothed out so successfully that direct recording on photographic paper is possible. On development this paper gives a copy immediately available for delivery to the customer. A 5 by 7-inch picture may now be sent complete, including the developing and drying operations at the receiving end, in thirty minutes, at a cost of a little over £13.

Various refinements to improve the sharpness of detail have been applied, with the result that it is now possible to transmit with clearness ordinary small newspaper type. A growing demand for the service is predicted, as it is now possible to transmit facsimiles of documents across the Atlantic as quickly as a letter may be transported between various parts of the same city.

Olympia Exhibition

THE many enthusiasts in England who predicted a record success for the 1929 National Radio Exhibition at Olympia have been more than justified. During the first three days, over 40,000 visitors passed through the turnstiles, and the average daily attendance exceeded that of 1928 by 3000. Within a few hours of the opening of the show, enough business had been transacted to cover the entire cost of the exhibition.

So far as we are concerned to-day little is known of the domestic life of the takahe; we know nothing of its mating or nesting habits; no eggs have been found to help us over certain difficulties; and the few isolated, widely scattered specimens that have been taken have aided us but little in unravelling the mysteries surrounding its lonely existence. We do know, however, as a result of the examination made by the Hon. G. M. Thomson, of the contents of the gizzard of the specimen reported on by Professor Benham, that its food consisted of vegetation, principally swamp grasses. It would be quite safe to assume, too, that insects would furnish a large portion of its diet, as would seeds and berries in season. Such foods are all eagerly sought after by members of the rail family.

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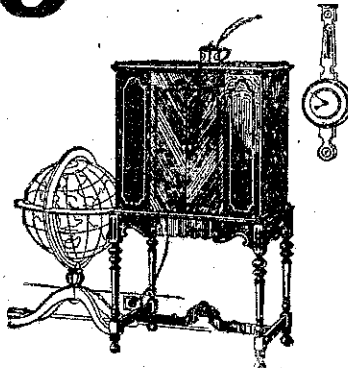
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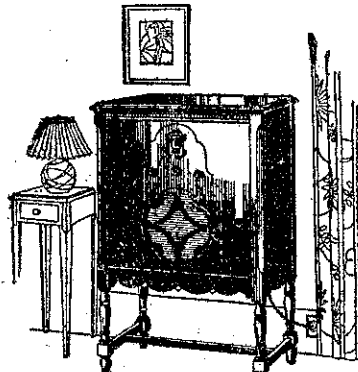
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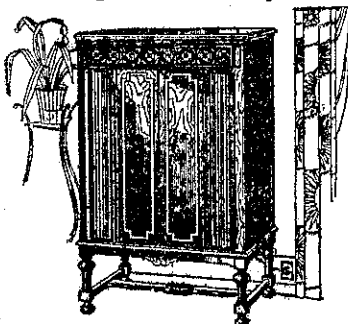
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