

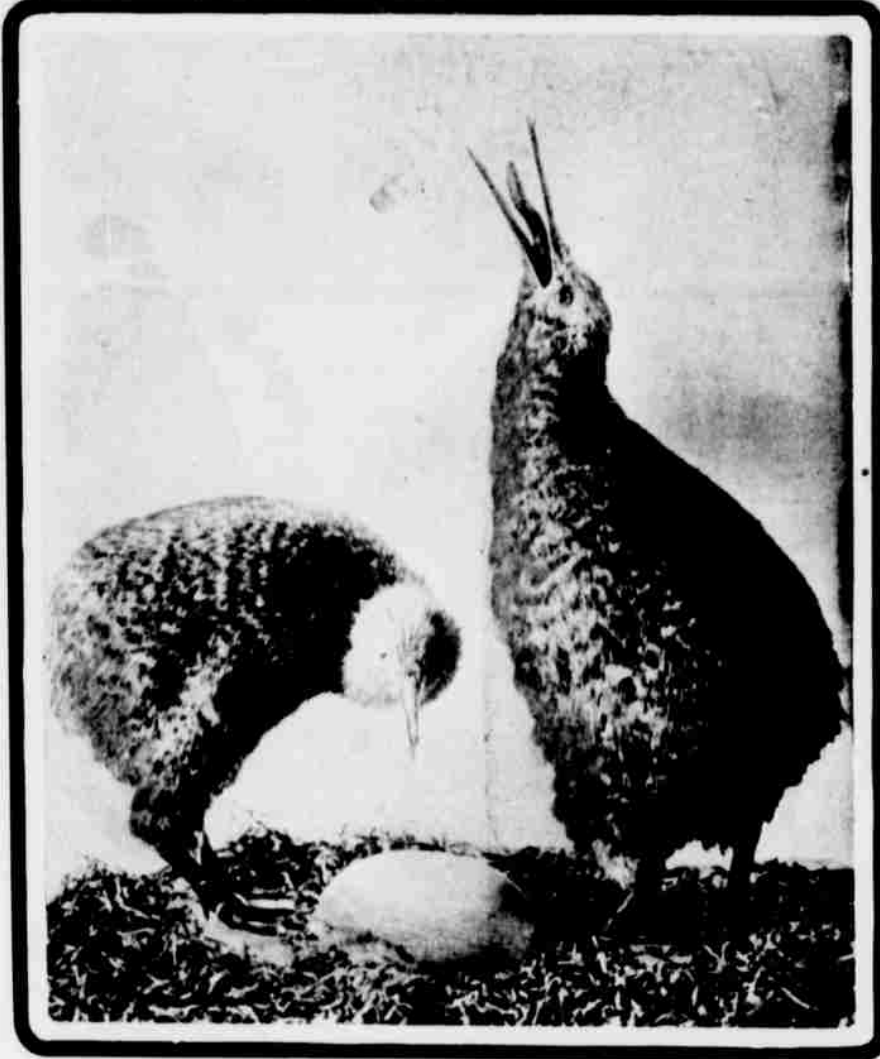
Some Freaks Found In New Zealand

(Copyright, 1901, by Frank G. Carpenter.)
CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand, March 14, 1901.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—How would you like to meet a bird as tall as a giraffe, which lays eggs as big as a pumpkin? You can see the image of one at Christchurch, New Zealand. You can see a baker's dozen of skeletons showing the gigantic monster in the different stages of its growth, and behind glass you can see some of the real eggs laid by it a century or more ago, when it trod the soil of this country. I refer to the great moa, supposed to be the

some of which I have seen here at Christchurch. The kiwis have hairlike feathers of somewhat the color of a quail. They have long bills, sharp at the point, with which they can bore down into the mud for worms, and their legs are much like those of the moa.

I have had several of them in my hands, and, by feeling carefully, I can discover what seems like a little lump on each side where the wing ought to be. Otherwise than this no wings are perceptible.

The kiwi is a night bird. At the college here, where I saw them, the birds were



THE KIWI, OR WINGLESS BIRD OF NEW ZEALAND.

biggest bird ever created. I sat down before the model of it in Christchurch, New Zealand, and made some notes describing it. Its tail as a bird stands on the floor is just as high as my head and its ankle is as big around as my calf. Its gigantic body, covered with gray feathers, might have been modeled out of a small haystack, and its tail, thin neck is stretched so high above its breast that the whole could not possibly be squeezed into the average parlor. It has no wings, but its legs are as strong as those of a camel, and it looks quite as big. Its feet have claws much like those of a turkey save that they are enormous in size and each a foot long.

I doubt not the original could have stamped out the life of a man at one blow. Beside one of the moa skeletons was placed the skeleton of an ordinary man, the head of the bird rising at least eight feet above the skull of the man. The bones were real bones found in this part of New Zealand; they are joined together by wires.

The first bones of the moa were discovered about sixty years ago. The bird existed in New Zealand within a very recent period and there are Maoris who will tell you that their forefathers hunted it. The probability, however, is that it antedates the advent of the Maoris, but there is no doubt that it was once eaten in great numbers, for in the old ovens which have been excavated quantities of cooked moa bones have been found. But as to when that time was and who the moa hunters were no one knows.

Eggs as Big as Foot Balls.

The moa eggs were each about a foot long. One was found some years ago by a man when digging the foundation of a house. He had gone down several feet when he came upon the skeleton of a man in a sitting posture. The egg was held in the man's bony fingers in such a manner as to bring it immediately opposite his mouth, and it is supposed that it was placed there with the idea that the ghost of the dead would have something to eat during the intervals of his long sleep. There were a stone spear and an ax by the side of the man, showing that he was probably a warrior, and his skull bore evidence of having received several hard knocks, probably on the battlefield. The egg was ten inches long and seven inches in diameter and its shell was about as thick as a silver 25-cent piece. Its inside was perfectly empty, but whether (live or the dead native had sucked out the contents the records do not say.

Wingless Birds of New Zealand.

The moa was wingless. It seems to have been a giant edition of some of the strange birds New Zealand has now. There are wingless birds in New Zealand not larger than good-sized chickens, which are moas in miniature. I refer to the kiwis,

penned up like chickens and had to be brought out of the coop for me to examine them. They seemed almost blinded by the light and ran about this way and that in apparent terror. The birds are now growing very scarce in New Zealand. The Maoris are fond of them for food, and their skins are highly prized as dresses for the chiefs. They are now only to be found in the dense beds of ferns which cover parts of New Zealand. It is very difficult to catch them, for they look much like the dead fern leaves, and they take refuge in crevices in the rocks and in deep holes which they excavate in the ground for their nests.

One of the most curious things about the kiwi is the size of its egg. It is almost as big as the bird itself, being of a creamy white color, as smooth and as glossy as ivory. The kiwi is rapidly being exterminated. The dogs hunt it in the thicket, and it is now rare that you find one outside the museums.

The Sheep-Eating Parrot.

There is another bird in New Zealand which is quite as curious as the kiwi. This is the kea parrot, which eats sheep, fastening its claws into the wool of the back and digging out the choice bits of flesh. Thousands of sheep have been destroyed by this bird, the loss from them being so great that the government once offered a reward of 75 cents a head, when as many as 15,000 keas were killed in a year. The kea has aristocratic tastes. It does not care for any part of the sheep except the kidneys and the fat which surrounds them. Through several generations of birds it has learned by instinct or tradition—whether birds talk or not I cannot say—just where the kidneys lie in the sheep's anatomy. I am told that it strikes the right spot every time, and that it bores a hole into the side of the sheep right over the kidneys, boring a hole in with its bill as smooth as though the flesh was cut round with a knife. The kea tears out the kidneys and the fat, and then leaves the sheep, which, of course, dies.

There are different theories as to how the keas acquired this taste for the finest of mutton. They had had nothing but berries and insects until sheep were introduced. Then they began to pick the meat from the sheep skins hung up to dry. Later on they attacked the live sheep, and after a time, having discovered just where the kidneys were, devoted their labors to no other part. There is no doubt of the fact that they take only the kidneys, and that every kea knows just where to strike a sheep the first time. Whether the birds talk to one another or not I do not know, but they certainly seem to work quite as intelligently as though they had language.

Nature's Freaks in New Zealand.

These are, however, but a few of the freaks which Dame Nature has created in

this out-of-the-way part of the world. There are others so strange that I hesitate to mention them. This is, you know, the land of the marsupials, or pouch-bearing animals. You have all heard of the kangaroos who have a bag attached to the outside of their bellies in which they carry their young. There are not many such in New Zealand. They are rather to be found in Australia. New Zealand, however, has marsupial rats, and I saw at the college here in Christchurch a mouse not much larger than a good-sized cricket which had a pouch on its belly in which it carried its young. This mouse is perhaps the smallest marsupial known. It is a part of the biological collection of the college museum at Christchurch, and was shown me by Prof. Marriner, the chief biologist. Another thing he showed me was a live lizard which he says is a descendant of a family of three-eyed lizards. This lizard is especially puzzling to the scientists just now. In the center of the head is a third eye, which is clearly visible through the skin of the young animal, but which becomes thickly covered when it reaches maturity. Prof. Marriner says there is little doubt but that this eye was once used. The lizard he showed me is about a foot long and, I should say, two inches in diameter about the waist.

I like the black swans of New Zealand. They are to be seen in all parts of the island, and you can shoot them anywhere along the lakes. They are even more beautiful than the white swans, their feathers looking like black velvet plush as they sail along the waters.

Vegetable Caterpillars.

The curiosities of vegetable life are quite as wonderful as those of animal life. One of the strangest is what is known as the vegetable caterpillar. This looks like a perfect caterpillar with a stem growing out of its head. The caterpillar itself is about two inches in length. When it is full grown the sprout comes out and takes root and grows into a vigorous plant about eight inches high, with a single stem, but no leaf. Some say that the caterpillar is a real live caterpillar, but this I am inclined to doubt. The only ones I have seen are the plants when they have been dried after being taken out of the ground.

I might also speak of New Zealand flax, a sort of flag which grows in many parts of the country and which is now being harvested largely for export. This flax has a fiber which makes a cloth as beautiful as silk. The Japanese are now experimenting with it, and it may eventually be one of the great products of the country. I have seen it growing in many places on this island and am told that thousands of tons are annually exported. The fiber looks somewhat like Philippine hemp.

Land Which Grows Turpentine.

Have you ever heard of the kauri gum? It is a solidified turpentine or resin which is found in great chunks on the top of the ground and below the surface in the northern island of New Zealand. The lumps are from the size of a walnut to that of a man's head, and single pieces have been found weighing as much as 100 pounds. This gum is often as clear as amber, varying greatly in color. Sometimes it is a rich yellow, sometimes brown, and sometimes just the color of champagne. It is used as a substitute for amber in cigar holders and pipes, but the most of it is sold to manufacturers of varnish. It is by no means a cheap article and the annual exports of it amount to several millions of dollars. In 1898 not quite 10,000 tons were exported, the total value of which was in the neighborhood of \$3,000,000. Altogether since 1853 more than \$45,000,000 worth of this gum has been gotten out, amounting in all to about 200,000 tons.

Among the Gum Diggers.

There are now about 7,000 men going over the country with spears and picks looking for this gum. They drive their spears down into the earth and when they find a piece dig it out. The gum lies within a limited area. It is mined on about 700,000 acres north of Auckland City and south and east of Auckland on about 90,000 acres more. Part of this is government land, upon which the right to dig the gum is sold at from \$5 to \$35 per annum. Other parts are private property.

Many of the gum diggers are Austrians, some Maoris and some English-Australians. They go out into the gum fields and camp in groups of twenty to thirty. Many of them work for themselves, some making as much as \$25 a week at it. There are men in the cities who deal in nothing else, the kauri gum exporters being among the chief business men of Auckland.

This gum comes from the kauri pine, a tree which is often 150 feet high and twelve feet thick. The kauri is about the best timber of New Zealand, and it is largely used in building and furniture making. The gum is the remains of the great forests of the past which have rotted away, leaving this imperishable resin. Some of the trees are barked for their gum, like our turpentine trees of the southern states. The most, however, still come from the deposits in the swamps.

Among the Maoris.

It is wonderful how few Maoris you see in traveling through New Zealand. The aboriginal New Zealander is fast passing away. There are now about 40,000 left. They are scattered over the country in colonies, having their own reservations and their own villages. They are represented in Parliament by four members, and they are largely governed by their chiefs, although subject to the laws of the country. I saw many of them in the North Island. The better class dress in European clothes, both men and women affecting bright colors.

The men have magnificent physiques.



SHEEP-EATING PARROT OF NEW ZEALAND.

They are big, broad-shouldered, heavyweights, with strong necks, big hands and big feet. They have chocolate brown complexions, high cheek bones, with noses more like those of the Anglo-Saxon than the American Indian. Nearly all of the men speak English. They are inoffensive and even when drunk do not raise as much trouble as our American aborigines.

I rather like the Maori women. They are not especially good looking, but they seem well disposed, genial and pleasant. Some of the younger ones are almost beautiful. At least, they would be were it not for their custom of tattooing cashmere shawl patterns on their chins and lips. The tattooing turns the cherry red of their lips to the blackness of ink. In fact, I would as soon think of kissing an ink bottle as one of these tattooed Maori maidens.

And, still, if you keep your eyes well raised the experience might be worth the trial. Many of them have rosy complexions. They have luxuriant hair, heavy eyebrows and beautiful eyes, liquid black and full of soul. Some of them are clean, and nearly all are intelligent. Their beauty, however, vanishes with years. They age rapidly, until their faces look like withered apples, punctured with ink spots.

Land of the Tattoo.

The Maoris understand the science of tattooing. In the past both men and women covered not only their faces but the greater part of their bodies with such decorations. The grand chiefs had their faces covered with ornamental spirals. They were tattooed on the thighs and hips in a Dolly Varden pattern, which often extended from the knees to the waist, giving his royal ribs the appearance of having on a pair of neat-fitting trunks.

The women then, as now, were tattooed chiefly on the hips and chin, with a sort of fish-hook curl at the corners of the eyes. Some of the women had also their thighs and breasts decorated, but I believe this custom has since disappeared. The tattooing instrument was a small bone chisel, which was driven in with a mallet. The pain was so great that it could only be done in sections, a complete job often lasting for years.

When the English first came here the Maoris were cannibals. Now they are nearly all Christians. They have their own churches and schools, and the most of them believe in our religion. The tribes warred with one another, and after a battle there was always a feast of human flesh, in which the women were not allowed to join. It was a disgrace to a man to be eaten, and for one to hint that a man's father had been eaten was taken as an insult.

I have before me a paper which tells just how one of these cannibal feasts was conducted. One corpse was sacrificed to the god of war and the remainder were given up to the braves who had taken part in the battle. The cooking ovens were dug out of the earth. The human flesh was thrown in and kept there for about twenty-four hours. When it was roasted the chief had the first bite, then his sons and then the whole army. The eating was interspersed with singing and dancing and all gorged themselves to such an extent that many died at every banquet. After the feast was over the remains were packed up in baskets and sent around to the neighboring tribes. If they were accepted the tribes were supposed to have made a treaty of friendship with the senders and to be ready to fight with them thereafter.

The Maoris had a far higher grade of civilization than our American Indians. They had a society of their own, the people of each tribe being divided up into classes con-

sisting of priests, chiefs, a middle class, lower classes and slaves. They had their own customs of war and were so noted for their bravery that it is doubtful whether the English could have gained a foothold on the island without great loss of life had it not been for their dissensions among themselves.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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