

ART. XXXVII.—*On the Wild Dogs of New Zealand.*

By TAYLOR WHITE.

[*Read before the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute, 12th August, 1889.*]

HAVING had the misfortune to become acquainted with wild dogs in the earlier days of settlement on new country, I will here give a description of nine.

I consider these dogs entirely distinct from the European dog. For the wild dogs met with on the Waimakariri River, in the alpine ranges of Canterbury, during the year 1856, were in colour and markings identical with those found in the alpine region of Lake Wakatipu, Otago, in 1860, a distance of several hundred miles apart. There seems little room to doubt that they were an original Maori dog. The fact of their wanting the two tan spots over the eyes mostly seen in European dogs of approximate colour is a very strong evidence also in favour of this opinion.

No. 1: White with patches of light gamboge-yellow, short hair, prick ears, longer hair on tail; dog; shot by self. No. 2: White, slight marks of black, slightly freckled with black short hair; dog; average size of a collie dog. No. 3: Dun or yellowish-brown, low-standing, hair long; slut. Nos. 2 and 3 lived together, and were poisoned. Only seen at a distance many times through a good telescope. I was told they were found dead near a nest under rock-shelter, in which were three dead pups. These dogs caused me a deal of work, I and my hutkeeper having to take turn-about in camping at night in the open on the further side of the sheep, the other sleeping in the tent. No. 1 was shot in the early morning, as he walked about quietly among the ewes and lambs which had not left camping-ground. He would walk after a lamb, when, the ewe turning to face him, the dog turned his head away, and was apparently interested in some distant object; on the ewe ceasing to notice him he would approach a little nearer, in a stealthy manner; so the flock were very little disturbed, only a few moving from before him. This was suddenly put a stop to by a bullet of lead from a tea-chest beaten up solid. The other two, working together, appeared to keep watch if the sheep were without protection in the day-time, when they picked the lambs, seizing them by the skin of the shoulder, which, if they escaped, would hang below the wound in a triangular flap, point downwards. One day I left the flock for a short time, and on my return they gave me a cheer, whether in the form of a howl or of a bark I cannot now define, before they disappeared over a hill-top, having visited the flock in my

short absence. But I have a strong impression that none of these dogs barked after the manner of the domesticated animal.

No. 4: White, freckled with black; dog. No. 5: White, freckled with black; slut. At the head-waters of the Oreti, Lake Wakatipu, Otago. These were a pair. Once my sheep-dog strayed away for a day or so, probably to visit them. He came home in a great hurry, and presently I heard a noise which reminded me of a noise from a kennel of hounds (which mostly consists of howling), when the two came in view running the scent. They saw me just as I was making for a hiding-place, gun in hand, so would not come very close up. I hit No. 5 in the neck with a charge of shot, my two sheep-dogs disappearing into the bush after the other. I made after her with my single-barrelled gun, empty, of course; but as we raced she began to recover, and distanced me after a long run.

No. 6: White, black spots, and freckled with black; dog. No. 7: White, light-gamboge colour in patches; slut. No. 8: White, light-gamboge colour patches; pup. These were a family party. I and my brother were riding home one very hot day when our dogs suddenly seemed to hear something which was inaudible to us, and started off at a great pace. We galloped after. On rising a terrace, there were the tame dogs holding the wild dog, the mother and pup standing near. On finding we only had a penknife, the dog was hamstringed, so that we might get the others also; but they had disappeared, and the heat was so great that our dogs would not take up the scent. So we returned, and killed the one caught.

No. 9: White, freckled with black; young dog. Ridden down and killed with stirrup-iron by John White, alone, without a dog.

These dogs, so peculiar in colour and markings, were of medium size, about that of an ordinary collie, neat head, sharp nose, without jowls or hanging lip; in shape like a Chinese hunting-dog. Those in Canterbury were seen in 1856, and several skulls were found, as if formerly plentiful, between the Poulter and Esk Rivers, branches of the Waimakariri.

In Otago during 1861 it is worthy of remark that those having large yellow patches were not freckled with yellow after the pattern of those marked with black and freckled with black. What I mean by "freckled" is a small collection of black hairs, here and there, on a white ground, wide apart, only sufficient to be visible, and not appearing as spots. No. 3 is remarkable as differing entirely from the others. Nos. 1, 7, 8, very handsome beautiful dogs.

Mr. Colenso holds the opinion that the Maori dog was a

small, helpless animal, only used as food or to catch ground-birds near at hand. One of his reasons is based on the fact that Captain Cook's party compare them in size to a shepherd's cur, which Mr. Colenso considers to be a cross-bred dog of small size, between a sheep-dog and terrier, or such small breed. Now, I feel sure that if you refer to Buffon you will find he speaks of the sheep-dog as a cur. In those days all dogs other than hunting or fighting dogs were designated curs; and so it became a term of reproach to speak of a person as a cur, meaning as without pluck or go. It did not indicate that the sheep-dog was of small size. Seeing the English sheep-dog was free from tax, but other dogs taxed, the shepherd would have no object in owning a sheep-dog other than true-bred. A dog of pure descent would be the most useful and trustworthy. From this it would seem Cook's voyagers really alluded to the genuine sheep-dog, which was a dog of considerable size, and active also.

Mr. Colenso quotes from the writings of George Foster, "A good many dogs were observed in their canoes, which they seemed very fond of, and kept tied with a string round their middle. They were of a rough, long-haired sort, with pricked ears, and much resembled the common shepherd's cur. They are of different colours, some spotted, some quite black, others perfectly white." The tying in canoe was, of course, to prevent them upsetting it. At Tolago Bay Cook says, "The dogs were very small and ugly."

Why should there not have been also toy-breeds? The Maori of the present day always keeps hunting-dogs, and also little deformed toys, which the women carry about in their arms when travelling, even long journeys, on horseback. These small dogs are white, with long curly hair, and black nose.

Quoting from Mr. John White: "The canoe Mangarara (dry twig) brought reptiles, insects, also dogs of the mohorangi breed (untamed of Heaven)." This is a good name for a breed of dogs. "Now, Tamure had one of the ancient Maori dogs with him on this journey. Chanting the incantations over the dog, he sent him on before him. The dog passed over the path unharmed, and Tamure followed him."\* Again, "Rua-putahanga said to herself, 'How shall I pass this place?' but her dog climbed up the cliff while she watched him, and she said to herself, 'Here is a place up this cliff where I may ascend.'" "The dog first discovered the road over Ta-piri-moko." These yarns would credit the dog with intelligence and activity. "Mahiti—mats made of the white hair of dogs' tails."

---

\* White's "Ancient Maori History," vol. iv., p. 92.

Mr. Colenso quotes from Parkinson, "In one canoe a handsome man, clad in many garments, upper garment made of black-and-white dogskin." "An old man sat in the stern of the canoe; had on a garment of some black skin, with long hair, dark-brown and white border."

My dogs were all short-haired excepting the dun-coloured one, which will not match with the others. I cannot remember exactly about the tails, but, as I never kept one as a trophy, they most likely were nothing unusual. I have never seen dogs of these colours among either Maoris or Europeans, and am particular not to use the term "liver-coloured," as not describing the bright yellow on these dogs. I had a cover for my telescope made of the yellow-and-white skin, but lost both in a flood when driving sheep.

The food of these dogs was chiefly rats, of which there were great numbers, also the native quail and weka. From the droppings of feathers, I think that an occasional pigeon was caught, and also the ground-lark. The pigeon might be caught when feeding on the Maori cabbage. In those days, on Craigieburn there were acres of this cabbage growing thick in certain places, and the pigeons came long distances to feed on it. Maoris were never met with in these localities, and so I was ignorant on the subject of their dogs till within the last ten years or so.

I think I have given strong evidence in proof of these dogs being the indigenous dog of New Zealand. The fact of the hair from the dog's tail being especially valued by the Maori would point the inference that the body-hair was short in length. I append a newspaper-cutting referring to wild dogs which would seem similar in colour to No. 3:—

"The question as to whether there are in New Zealand aboriginal dogs—that is to say, dogs which are descendants of canines which were here anterior to the advent of the European—has often been discussed (says the *Rangitikei Advocate*), and the verdict has generally been in the negative. Mr. Bruce, M.H.R., Mr. William Cameron, and other Paraekaretu settlers, however, say that they have often seen dogs which are in the strict sense of the term 'native dogs.' These animals are of a perfectly distinct type. They are big and strong, and in appearance they exhibit a combination of the wolf and the fox. Their colour is fawn. A couple of these dogs have recently been visiting the Paraekaretu flocks of sheep, Mr. Bruce's amongst others. One of their characteristics is their fondness for lambs. They always go for the lambs first."

---