

Captain Mair said that traditions indicated that the hokioi was a very large bird of prey, and that it could not have been the frigate-bird that was intended.

The Chairman was still inclined to think it was the frigate-bird, which was a true bird of prey—in fact, the vulture of the ocean.

Mr. Bruce, in reply, was glad to find that his communication had so much interest. He might remark that, if the description of the colour of the hokioi given in the *waiata* was to be taken as reliable, it could not have been the frigate-bird that was intended.

2. "On the Antiquity of the Moa," by Captain G. Mair.

ABSTRACT.

The author referred to the large amount of information collected bearing on the moa. He considered that the probable extinction of the moa could only be fixed approximately after all the evidence had been exhausted. He quoted numerous Maori traditions and accounts given him by old natives, showing the several localities—five or six in number—where, fifteen or sixteen generations ago, solitary moas were reputed to exist. He gave the history of two *pikis*, or head-dresses, made from moa-feathers, and named Te Rauamoa and Te Rauopiopio, which were famous in former times, and to which there are numerous allusions in songs and proverbs. He pointed out the extraordinary and fabulous accounts given by the natives, which proved that it was impossible that their immediate or even remote ancestors could have possessed any intimate or reliable knowledge of the moa; that among the vast number of histories of blocks inquired into by the Native Land Court hardly any allusion had ever been made to moas. He gave instances of the extraordinary preservation of human bodies under certain conditions after death, and suggested that the specimens of moa-remains found in an almost fresh condition had probably been preserved in some such manner. The conclusion he came to was that the moa was exterminated at least twelve generations ago.

Mr. Field said he could produce evidence to prove that the moa was in existence in these Islands not more than fifty years ago. There were numbers of natives who knew all about the moas, and who had eaten them. They described how they killed men by striking out in front with the foot. He believed the chief cause of their disappearance was that the wild pigs had destroyed their eggs. He had seen undoubted moa-feathers. He described how the bones were cut with a sharp instrument, evidently a tomahawk introduced by Europeans. He would send down all the evidence he could collect bearing on the subject.

Sir W. Buller stated that struthious birds are in the habit of striking downwards with the foot, lifting it towards the breast. As to the head-dress of moa-feathers said to have been in possession of the late Rev. R. Taylor, this relic was now in the collection of Mr. Henry Harper, of Wanganui. He (the speaker) had recently examined it. The plumes were only cassowary-feathers, and the mounting was split bamboo or rattan from the islands.

Mr. Tregear said that the legends read by Captain Mair were some of them quite new and valuable. The remarks regarding the feather plumes quite bore out what he thought formerly as to the Maori not knowing the *Dinornis*. "Rauamoa" evidently meant "a plume belonging to (a man's name) Moa," and "Rauopiopio" showed that it was a plume of the bird piopio. This piopio was not the thrush (*Turnagra hectori*), but a lost bird; certainly not *Dinornis*. The real feathers of the *Dinornis* had all been discovered by naturalists or geologists, and were not found in possession of Maoris. When Maoris of to-day had legends to tell concerning the moa they were all of such preposterous and mythical character that they proved the truth of what the old chiefs of fifty years ago alleged—