

acre so planted. Up to date, land orders have been issued to nine proprietors in Canterbury for 1,189 acres, and to three proprietors in Otago for 452 acres—in all, 1,641 acres to sixteen proprietors, as a bonus for planting about 750 acres of private land. In Canterbury, where there is a great extent of treeless country, and where more attention has been given to tree-planting than in any other part of the colony, the Provincial Government, in 1875, set aside a number of planting reserves, comprising, in all, 18,493½ acres. In February last, a Board of Managers was constituted for the purpose of having these reserves planted. The necessary means are to be derived from letting some of the reserves for a time, and with the rents planting from year to year as great an area as possible. The local bodies are taking a great interest in this business, and have voted funds to give it a start. Other circumstances are favourable to the success of a work which in a few years may greatly alter for the better the aspect of an extensive landscape.

Rabbit Pest.

This has so overrun the pastoral country as in some districts to have seriously curtailed the carrying capacity of the runs, and proportionately diminished the rents in those cases where it is assessed on the number of sheep. The evil is greatest in Otago and Southland, and some idea of its magnitude is afforded by the Custom-house returns of the number of rabbit-skins exported during the year ending 30th June, 1879, which are as follow:—From Bluff, 4,611,579 skins; from Dunedin, 528,432 skins; from Lyttelton, 62,854 skins: total export for New Zealand, 5,202,865 skins. It is manifest that this evil can only be abated by general concerted action over the infested areas. “The Rabbit Nuisance Acts, 1876 and 1877,” provide for the constitution of districts, trustees, levy of rates, compulsory destruction of rabbits, and the bonus of one half-penny for every skin exported that is the produce of a district constituted under either Act. Shooting, trapping and hunting, have been the means hitherto mostly employed in coping with the evil, but the great success of “poisoning by means of corn steeped in phosphorous and flavoured with oil of rhodium”* in Kaikoura District, Marlborough, and referred to in Mr. Goulter’s report, is being tried also in other infested districts with much success. Suffocation has also been successful in the Colony of South Australia, and in Southland. This is done by placing bisulphide of carbon in the burrows, and closing up the entrance with a sod. There is not the slightest doubt but that the evil will be reduced to manageable limits, and, as the country gets more occupied, it will get virtually eradicated altogether, except in the higher and more inaccessible back country.

Improvement of Lands before Sale.

In November last a sum of £58,500 was voted towards improving roads to Crown lands before sale. Nearly all the works contemplated have been entered on, several are completed, and others are under contract and will be finished early this summer. Immediately thereafter the improved blocks will be offered for selection. The improvement of Crown lands before sale, by rendering them accessible by the felling of bush and formation of road lines, erection of bridges in some cases, and cutting of main outfall drains in others, is absolutely necessary to the settlement of bush districts and of interior and back-lying country. It is quite probable that the outlay, in some instances, may not at once be repaid by the sale of land; but it will be so ultimately.

Departmental.

In those district offices where the land is mostly sold on immediate payment, there has been a falling-off in business, while in those where the settlement clauses are more in vogue there has been an increase. At the head office there has been received the usual references from the district offices, and correspondence from the public with the Minister of Lands. It is due to the energy and promptitude of Mr. Elliott that this multitudinous business is not allowed to accumulate or fall in arrear.

J. McKERROW.

* Recipe: “9 gallons water, 100 lbs. wheat crushed, 1 lb. phosphorous, 1 lb. sugar, 1 fluid oz. of oil of rhodium. When the water is hot, put in the sugar and rhodium, stirring well, then add the wheat; just before boiling, pour in the phosphorous, previously dissolved in a “billy” or saucepan of boiling water; stir well, and, as soon as the mixture boils, draw fire, cover up closely with wet sacks for thirty hours; it is then fit for use.” Remarks: “About a tablespoonful is sufficient for each bait laid. Rabbits eat this wheat greedily, but sheep do not touch it—hence there is no danger to stock.”—Correspondence, *Otago Witness*, 9th and 16th August, 1879.