

poorer. But immediately they got the phosphorized oats, and discovered how to use them properly, they began to keep the pest in check, and he was glad to say they could now hold their own and get probably a little advantage over them. The number of rabbits was getting fewer and fewer, and he did not agree with Mr. Phillips at all in his opinion about the inefficacy of poisoning. Of course there was no doubt that what would suit one description of country might be perfectly useless in another. The country he had referred to was mountainous and bare; they had frosts in the winter: and that description of country appeared to be better for poisoning than any other. They poisoned for three months in the year and trapped the other portion. They had turned out the natural enemy of the rabbit, but with no great effect. On another property near the coast, of a different nature—mostly English-grass land—they thought to overcome the rabbits by turning out the natural enemy, such as stoats and weasels. They went to considerable expense in making experiments, but if they had relied upon that alone they would not have had a sheep upon the station at this moment, possibly. They had to resort to continual poisoning for two or three months in the winter, and trapping and shooting during the rest of the year. They trapped all the year round. They had found the use of dogs in a pack very harassing to the stock, and nothing like so good as ordinary trapping, because in the country he was referring to the rabbits were able to burrow. In the higher parts of Otago much of the country was very rocky, and netting and that sort of thing would not be serviceable at all, or to anything like the extent it would be in smooth country. Of course, if they had rock in one place, sand in another, and scrub in a third, they must adopt different systems. He was not acquainted with Mr. Phillips's country, but in Southland it would not do to give up poisoning and trapping. With regard to the rabbit-factories he had only experience of one. It used to cost his company a good deal of money every year to keep down the rabbits; but since the factory had been regularly at work four or five months in the year the cost had been infinitesimal. In employing men to trap they instructed them not to use dogs. The rabbits had diminished greatly since the factory had been in operation. He only spoke of one place. With regard to wire-netting, he was in a district the other day in South Canterbury where the Government had gone to considerable expense in order to prevent the rabbits from going northward. He believed there were fifty miles of expensive wire-fencing there, and a very good fence it was; he did not think any one could wish for a better. It was attended to by men appointed by the Government to see that when any little gap was made it was mended immediately, and to watch that no one injured the fence so as to allow the rabbits to go through. Each man had got from eight to twelve miles of fencing to look after, so that he could practically see the whole of what was under his charge almost every other day, and could keep it in good order. In consequence there was very little chance of rabbits getting through the fence. But there were a few rabbits there before the fence was put up, and when he was there the other day he saw as many rabbits on one side of the fence as on the other.

(At this stage Sir John Hall, K.C.M.G., entered the chamber, was introduced to the Conference, and took the chair.)

Continuing his remarks, Mr. BRYDONE said, This fence had been erected for something like three or four years, and he was afraid it had not served its purpose. Wire-netting, of course, was a very good thing if you had got cleared ground, and were thoroughly ahead of the rabbits, but if the rabbits were inside he was afraid it was of very little service indeed.

Mr. RITCHIE asked if Mr. Brydone thought it was the fault of the fence. The rabbits could not get over the fence.

Mr. BRYDONE thought not. But he believed some rabbits had been there before the fence was put up. He considered the fence a good one, and it was kept in good order. As to the various suggestions of Mr. Phillips regarding disease, and all that sort of thing, they could not wait on that. There had been no discovery yet to kill off the rabbits by infectious disease, and he was very much afraid that it would be a long time before anything was hit upon likely to serve their purpose.

Mr. COLEMAN PHILLIPS rose to make an explanation. Mr. Brydone had stated that he did not agree with his views on poisoning. He (Mr. Phillips) had not condemned poisoning, he only mentioned it as one of four or five remedies. He used poison himself. He would ask the Conference to remember that they had to consider the interests of Australia, as well as those of the North and South Islands of New Zealand. He had expected Mr. Bruce to give some information on the subject, but he understood that the matter was not now in that gentleman's charge.

Mr. BRUCE said he was not in a good position to say very much, because he had not had much to do with the rabbit-pest since 1884, but he could speak of it a little from hearsay. What New South Wales believed in was fencing. With regard to what had been said about rabbits being inside the fence, he thought the proper thing was to see that they got rid of the few rabbits that remained inside, and afterwards to see that no rabbits got over the fence. They believed thoroughly in fencing the runs, but more especially latterly in fencing off the water. They thought if they got command of the water in a dry country they got command of the rabbits, for they could not do without water, and in dry weather always came to it. They believed thoroughly in poisoning, and had a machine for ploughing and sowing the poisoned grain at the same time. They used phosphorized oats, and also poisoned the natural plants, of which the rabbits were very fond. They poisoned the plants, chaff, oats, and wheat, and had a systematic way of laying the poison. They also poisoned with arsenic-water. They had tanks enclosed and the fencing so arranged that the rabbits could get to the poisoned water in the troughs, and not the sheep. Some went the length of poisoning the water-holes, but that was dangerous to the stock. They had a Rabbit Act, but it was practically a dead-letter. There was a provision in the Act to compel owners of land to destroy the rabbits, but when they made an attempt to enforce the Act they were met with the difficulty which Mr. Tabart had spoken of, for when a man with a hundred thousand sheep was convicted a penalty of £2 was imposed, which was, of course, altogether inadequate. He agreed with Mr. Tabart in his opinion as to the factories. They had had a sad experience in regard to the