

17. Then, you think that is one thing the Bill should make provision for?—Yes. I have suggested putting the codlin-moth and all pests now existing in the colony, or likely to come into the colony, which can be disseminated by means of the fruit, in a schedule by themselves. That might be called Schedule A, and that no fruit coming from an orchard infected with pests mentioned in Schedule A should be allowed to come to a clean district, except under the supervision of an Inspector. The orchardists in Canterbury do not wish to urge anything unfair or unreasonable on districts which are not so happily situated as their own. Therefore we do not ask that fruit should be absolutely tabooed from an infected orchard, but merely that the Inspector should examine and pass it if clean, and that there should be a penalty if people knowingly sent infected fruit into a clean district, or offered it for sale. I have suggested one schedule for these pests that can be fruit-borne, and another for pests which cannot be spread by means of the fruit, such as the American blight, the red spider, and the scale. These latter pests, of course, can be disseminated far and wide through the country by means of nursery stock. I saw a nursery in Canterbury a few days ago from which quantities of trees were being sent to auction-rooms in Christchurch. Some of them were as badly infected as they could be with the American blight, with the red spider and the scale. Persons ignorant of fruit-culture would not notice the eggs of these insects in the nodes of the trees, would buy them cheap at auction, and pests of every kind would thus be disseminated through the country. That sort of thing should be stopped, because it is useless for people with large orchards to spend their time and money improving them and keeping them clean when they may have people near them who are thus spreading and propagating pests.

18. *Hon. the Chairman.*] The Bill makes this provision:—"The Governor by Order in Council gazetted may from time to time make such regulations as he deems necessary for any of the purposes following, that is to say,—(1) Prescribing the manner in which diseased plants or fruit and infected packages shall be treated, cleansed, destroyed, or otherwise disposed of; (2) Providing for the registration of such orchards as are nurseries, and the terms and conditions of such registration." Would not that meet the case?—Yes, partially, and that brings me to another suggestion for dealing with all pests in nurseries and orchards, which is embodied in the amendment which I have drafted and hand in. I have based my amended clauses on the Rabbit Act, for this reason: the Magistrates, the public, and the lawyers understand the working of the Rabbit Act. It has been tested in Court over and over again; it has gone through the fire, and is workable. The clause I have suggested provides that the Inspector may enter at any time into an orchard or nursery; the Inspector's opinion as to whether there are pests which ought to be checked is conclusive. It is no doubt a large power to put in the hands of the Inspector, but it is necessary that he should have it. There should be a printed form of notice to be signed by the Inspector calling upon the orchardist to adopt measures to prevent the spread of or eradicate as far as possible the pests. The Inspector should have power to say what ought to be done. There are different remedies well known to experts, which have been tested not only in New Zealand, but in all parts of the world. People ignorant of them ought to be notified what they should do. If an orchardist neglects within seven days, or whatever time may be fixed upon, to take the measures prescribed in the notice to check the pest, or if, having so begun, he does not continue to do it in a manner satisfactory to the Inspector, there is a penalty. If the orchardist persists in neglecting to take reasonable action the Inspector may put on men to treat the orchard, and the cost is to be charged to the owner. Those amendments are modelled on the Rabbit Act. Some gentlemen are inclined to doubt the possibility of dealing effectively with fruit-pests, in parts of the colony at all events. I say that no one who has had any experience in growing fruit can have any doubt upon the matter. But to suppose that you are going to destroy the pests in a badly neglected orchard, particularly where the trees are forty or fifty feet high, with one dressing is absurd; well-directed labour for two or three seasons is necessary. I should like to give an instance of what can be done with an infected orchard. I have visited Mr. Wilson's orchard frequently before he took it up six years ago, and since. The trees were upwards of thirty years old, and had been terribly neglected. Couch-grass was growing all over the land. Cattle were allowed to graze amongst the trees. The grass had also been cut year after year and taken away for hay, which is fatal to the health of the trees. The consequence was that the little fruit grown in that orchard was valueless and unmarketable. Mr. Wilson set to work, cultivated highly, syringed the trees systematically, and manured. The result is that the pear-trees, which he had been advised to cut down, are now bringing in £3 and £4 per annum apiece. Therefore gentlemen in other parts of the colony who have old orchards need not despair. It will take two or three years to do all that is necessary, but it can be done, and will pay well. Therefore I think some mild compulsion on slovenly orchardists is desirable, even in their own interests apart from the danger to their neighbours.

19. From your evidence, it would appear that you are in favour of cultivation?—Yes, and plenty of it. I should like to say, with regard to the prospects of fruit-growing in Canterbury, that I am exceedingly sanguine. For a great number of years the orchard in which I am largely interested was run at a dead loss. Year after year there was a dismal result of the loss of some hundreds of pounds. That has changed, and it is now going on steadily to the good. The production is increasing every year. We were the first to start the cider-industry in New Zealand on anything like a large scale. We have imported fruit scions of the best cider-trees from Devonshire and Herefordshire, and grafted them with success. I look forward to the cider industry being a very large thing in Canterbury and in the North Island. My company also started exporting fruit to England, but during the last five or six years we have had an excellent market in Rio. A considerable quantity of our best fruit has been purchased by an Auckland firm for sale in South America, and they have paid us a good price for it.

20. Better than in the colony?—Certainly. We send some thousand of cases each year to Rio, through two or three firms, who buy it from us.