

## A COMING MENACE TO NEW ZEALAND.

### DESTRUCTION OF SEA-BIRDS BY WASTE OIL.

"Never shall I forget the first sea-bird I saw destroyed by the oil, a guillemot in the last stages of starvation cast up on the beach by the tide, no longer a bird in form, but just a mass of black filth, terrible because alive. I don't want to shock you, but these things have to be told, and after all to hear about suffering is far less terrible than to experience it or to watch it.

"Since then I have seen sea-birds in hundreds, either drifted up by the tide or cast ashore by the waves in heavy weather, gannets, cormorants, guillemots, razor-bills and puffins, and every one of them was either dead or dying of starvation. That is the fate of every sea-bird caught in the oil; as I told you just now it can neither dive, nor swim, nor fly, it just drifts starving on the sea currents till it dies and sinks, or is cast ashore.

"Surely it is a terrible thing to say that hundreds of thousands of beautiful sea-birds die every year of slow starvation along our shores, but even more terrible is the fact of their degradation, for the plumage of a bird is everything to it, as you would understand if you ever saw the frantic efforts of even a slightly oiled bird to clean itself.

"The case of the birds doesn't want any special pleading, it speaks for itself; and it would speak even more appealingly could you see my clients as vividly as I see them, the great gannets, the cormorants, guillemots, and razor-bills and the cosy little puffins, surely of all birds the most charming.

"There is only one thing to be done, and that is to stop the ships from discharging their waste oil into the seas. But it can only be done by an international agreement between the maritime nations to respect the sea."

*London radio broadcast by Mr. H. de Vere Stacpoole.*

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### OPOSSUMS.

(By CAPTAIN E. V. SANDERSON.)

It is pleasing to note that the Minister of Internal Affairs has decided to take the only satisfactory course and institute a more comprehensive survey on the food habits of these animals in New Zealand before permitting further distribution. An examination of some 266 stomachs from Kapiti Island has already been made. These showed little indications of animal matter but that considerable bird food was consumed. It was stated by the scientist who made the examination that there was food for both bird and opossum present on Kapiti. This latter contention is,