

COMMON OPOSSUM.

(Extract from "*Wild Life in New Zealand*," Part I.—*Mammalia*.
By HON. GEO. M. THOMSON, M.L.C., F.L.S., F.N.Z.Inst.)

These animals are not natives of New Zealand. They were first brought to this country from Australia about sixty years ago, and were liberated near Riverton. Later importations have frequently been made, both private individuals and acclimatisation societies introducing them. Thus the Auckland Society and Sir George Grey brought a considerable number from Australia between 1869 and 1876, and Kawau at one time was overrun with them. The Wellington Society liberated nineteen Tasmanian black opossums in the ranges behind Paraparaumu in 1892; and the Otago Society got twelve silver-grey opossums from Gippsland in 1895, and liberated them in the Catlin's district. They have increased greatly in most wooded parts of the Dominion..

OVER-GRAZING OF UPLAND COUNTRY.

(By "PONGA.")

A Commission, set up by the United States of America, has recently furnished a three volume report on the over-grazing of high country. Such national disasters as Mississippi floods have led the authorities to see the need of attention to this grave matter. Here in New Zealand, most of our land is steep with an extremely shallow soil covering. Be it remembered, too, that this soil is always running down towards the sea and never running up. It took the forests, which formerly grew on this land, thousands upon thousands of years to form the covering on the underlying rocks. Ours is a narrow country with no part far removed from the sea. Swift streams and rivers quickly convey anything which enters them to the sea. Surely then the too drastic denudation of our highlands in this country calls for thought and enquiry. But when we add to this more or less necessary use of our high country, the grazing of many thousands of plant-eating animals on the forest covered backbone ranges, surely it is time to do more than think and enquire. There are some, well qualified to judge, who consider that some of the forests on our southern ranges are already doomed. Are we going to stand idly by while these essential forests are destroyed? If so every citizen will pay a well merited and heavy penalty because no nation can prosper without a sufficiency of forests, and New Zealand at best can be no more than a pauper's country, and all because we idly looked on and allowed the few to make use of our priceless forests for the sake of a very little mere sport.