

PRICE OF BETRAYAL

WORLD-MUSEUM DEFILED FOR FORTY POUNDS A YEAR.

HOW long it takes to educate a Government even in the A B C of decency to indigenous fauna and flora is strikingly shown during the dozen years or more of our fight for fair play in the Auckland and Campbell Islands. Here are two mile-posts of history:

(1)—3rd July, 1925: Minister of Lands, the Hon. A. D. McLeod, to the Forest and Bird Protection Society: "In view of the annual rental the Lands Department is receiving from the (sheep) runs, I do not see that the proposal to reserve the Islands (the Auckland Islands) for the purpose suggested (conservation of flora, fauna, avifauna) is warranted."

(2)—1936: H. Guthrie Smith in "Joys and Sorrows of a N.Z. Naturalist" (chapter on the Auckland Islands): "The numbers of albatross, according to those who have known their haunts for half-a-century, have of late years much diminished. This is owing to the presence of sheep on areas not fit for sheep—an enterprise that has hurt the very originator of the idiotic business, benefited in the present nobody, and is abridging the existence of birds that are a source of pleasure to everyone who sails the sea."

A former New Zealand Government permitted and abetted the defilement of the sub-Antarctic islands by sheep, not only in the case of the Auckland Islands, but also of Campbell Island. Thither also were taken from New Zealand thousands of sheep—it is said, 3000. Mr. Guthrie Smith describes what has happened on Campbell Island as "an offence to God and man," and he adds:

"What has been done, the defilement by stock of this splendid natural sanctuary for the pitiful sum of £40, is truly an example of what not to do—forty pounds to enable every man who has touched it in the business way not to gain but to lose money; forty pounds for the right to burn, graze, and destroy."

THE "THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER" OVER AGAIN.

The forty pounds mentioned by Mr. Guthrie Smith as the annual rent received by the Government from the Campbell Island sheep run

was also the annual rent received by the Government from the Auckland Islands sheep runs. Fancy—a whole forty pounds.

It was "in view of the annual rental" (this fateful forty pounds) that conservation of the Auckland Islands was deemed by a Minister of Lands to be not "warranted." It is hard to believe that such an opinion could have been held at the Lands Ministry only a dozen years ago.

These forty pieces of gold deserve to rank with the historic thirty pieces of silver as a classic price for betrayal of the innocent.

No excuse in the way of ignorance was open to the New Zealand Government for the desecration of sub-Antarctic islands, as for at least two generations their bird treasures and their plant treasures were a matter of world-knowledge. For instance, the world had long known that the Auckland Islands had at least five bird species (snipe, parrakeet, "flightless" duck, a shag, and a merganser) found nowhere else on earth. And in "New Zealand Plants and their Story," the late Dr. L. Cockayne, F.R.S., had written of the unique plants of the Auckland Islands, so justly famed and so hard (some impossible) to reproduce in our gardens.

DR. COCKAYNE AND THE FORTY POUNDS.

Had the late Dr. Cockayne been asked at any stage of the proceedings for his opinion as to whether the Government should aid and abet sub-Antarctic sheep-farming, or do its best to remove the sheep, there is no doubt what his opinion would have been. He is known to have remarked to a friend: "Forty pounds a year for the destruction of one of the finest open air museums on earth!"

It was not till March, 1934, that the Government reserved the Auckland Islands for preservation of fauna and flora, the sheep-run licences having expired, except so far as one portion—Adams Island—is concerned. This island, comprising an area of 55,000 acres, was reserved under the Land Act in 1910. On Campbell Islands ("originally nearly as wonderful as the Auckland Islands"—Cockayne) the sheep-run licences also have expired, ac-