

understand her ways. They remind one of the old farmer who loitered all day by the railway in sight of a tunnel, expressing fresh astonishment every time a train, approaching at full speed, managed to aim true for that little hole in the hill, and escape destruction by a hair's breadth. Disaster seems inevitable only because the laws which prevent it are not understood.

The clogging, all-destroying oil, which condemns sea-birds to a cruel death by the thousand, is not a greater menace to bird-life than the policy of "scientific protection." Fortified by the pretence of a fabulous knowledge of birds, which they are very far from possessing, a few second-rate ornithologists have launched this pseudo-scientific dogma that the more destructive birds must be judiciously persecuted, and foisted it on plenty of enthusiasts as the ideal to work for. They have even persuaded certain good naturalists to give it their qualified support.

Man's deliberate interference with Nature, for whatever reason it is attempted, is, in nine cases out of ten, disastrous and unjustifiable. The aim of protection should be to restore the balance and automatically to sweep away those abuses of the over-abundant species which are the sole excuse for scientific protection. I do not suggest that we should never interfere with Nature at all. But any policy which involves a steady, calculated interference with Nature is wrong and must be unsuccessful. If Nature is thwarted in attaining a balance by one method she will adopt another, and the alternative being less natural will almost certainly be less favourable to man than the first state of things.

It should be made an article of faith that Bird Protection is the Protection of Birds, not The Protection of Some Birds by Shooting Others. A great hawk flying is an inspiring sight; if we cannot bear to have the price paid in prey which its maintenance requires, we do not deserve to see it.

"Don't forget that if a species becomes extinct something has gone out of the world for ever. Something unique, built up by the slow fashioning of evolution, has been irrevocably destroyed. We maintain museums for dead specimens while we kill off the specimens in the world's museum of life. We blame our ancestors for thoughtlessly exterminating the dodo and the quagga. There will be less excuse for us if we leave our descendants a world further denuded of life's abundance and life's variety."

—Professor Julian S. Huxley.

SOIL SAVING.

NEED FOR URGENT ACTION.

We have heard much about land deterioration, much about erosion, much about misplacing settlers on lands which, owing to their nature, should never have been despoiled of their original covering.

When one comes to look upon the whole as a whole the work of undoing grievous past mistakes and making proper plans for the future does appear to be a colossal one.

The first step, a thorough survey of all the lands in the Dominion with the object of ascertaining their best uses in accordance with the varying conditions of soil and situation, is to be attempted. Straight away will come the problem of displacing many settlers who are on lands which should be in forest or in their original natural condition, as, for instance, the greater part of the tussock country running through the middle of the South Island. All such settlers in the North and South Islands hold their lands legally, and compensation would be necessary.

Then, again, we have to eliminate the vast numbers of trespassing browsing animals in our forests and on our uplands, a work alone which would cost many millions. Verily, the task of undoing those things which we ought not to have done is a truly formidable one. Yet, if we do not tackle the job heroically, we are surely heading towards dire disaster. Our fertile food producing lands will steadily undergo a process of destruction until at last their former great productiveness will merely be but a memory. One wonders whether the New Zealander can really rise to the occasion. At present much expenditure is being put into unnecessary roads while vital national needs do not receive adequate attention. The conservation of our natural resources, such as the soil, is given secondary consideration to subjects like currency, which, after all, is merely a convenience for the exchange of goods.

"People who do not make friends with the birds do not know how much they miss.—John Burroughs.