

THE MEDDLERS....

The Things They Would Acclimatise (By "Ahu-Whenua")

WE have for ever with us those people who must busy themselves with efforts to introduce animals, birds, even crawlers, which for some reason or other are claimed to be desirable immigrants. Not only acclimatisation societies, but individuals are included in the general term busybodies. Example—the southern people who, per medium of a society, attempted to bring into the country a type of snail (ostensibly for wild duck-feed), which is known to harbour a sheep pest, the fluke. The Canterbury Sheepowners' Union strongly and successfully opposed the proposal because the snail was known to be a danger; the sheep liver-fluke had caused huge losses of flocks in other countries.

Fortunately there is a vigilant government department, Internal Affairs, which is on the watch to prevent such mischievous proposals going any further.

We have sufficient plagues of our own without importing more. Millions of slugs are reported from Wellington to be causing a great amount of damage to grass paddocks in the Marton district.

Woodpecker Wanted?

Now there is a man who has suggested that a woodpecker should be acclimatised in New Zealand in order to peck into native trees and kill the wood-boring insects and grubs. There was a poem we used to learn in our school days, with a line which sticks in the memory about the woodpecker tapping the hollow oak tree. Possibly the proposal for introduction was prompted by a sentimental desire to bring a little Northern-Hemisphere life into our comparatively unpecked bush. The fact is that we have a perfectly good and useful woodpecker of our own, the kaka parrot; and we would have another beneficial pecker-out of noxious borer grubs had not our alleged bird-lovers in the past killed out the beautiful and useful huia to fill glass cases.

No More Fur-Bearers.

Yet another would-be improver of our forest life is an English fur-farmer who called at Auckland some time ago and advocated the introduction of the mink and other furry

creatures for breeding and building up the skin trade, in the interests of the business that provides lovely women with the pelts of wild animals. This proposal, of course, was not prompted by anything but commercial reasons; its author scouted a suggestion that the mink might become a great nuisance. Nothing doing; New Zealand has had enough of the accursed opossum and doesn't want anything more in the fur department. Except, of course, those people concerned in the business. The orchardists, the gardeners, and bushmen who know the habits of the opossum have repeatedly urged that the creatures be declared a noxious animal, with all State protection removed. It is as great a curse to the trees and the native birds as the rabbit is to the grass lands. The Government still hesitates to take this obviously necessary step because the opossum produces a bit of revenue, but it is not likely to give any encouragement to more fur-bearing animals.

Beaver and Silver Fox.

There was a man a few years ago who advocated the introduction of the beaver for the South Island forest rivers, especially for those of Westland and Fiordland. Our bush streams, he declared, would be just the place for beaver farms, and it would be so interesting to see the colonies of those bright-eyed little creatures. No doubt, also, our young trees would be exactly to the taste of the beaver tribe.

There were others who wanted this and that foreign animal acclimatised here, on one pretext and another. The squirrel was one creature that would be welcome because it was so English and would give a more "Home"-like air to our colonial bush. Still another urged that the silver fox be brought from North America to make free of the Southern forest for fur-trappers' sake.

Once again, nothing doing. The public has been put on its guard against such attempts to bastardize the bush life of New Zealand, and the Department of Internal Affairs consistently declines requests from interested people and from faddists to bring these nuisances into the country. The biological value of scientific