

new policy than to test the Asses' Bridge, it is not easy to coerce the asses, whose names are yours and mine. I have yet to meet the farmer who pays rates or taxes cheerfully. Because it may cost as much to kill one rabbit as to kill ten, as much to kill ten as to kill a hundred or a thousand, that last rabbit has more than a 50-50 chance of survival. Coming to terms with him is coming to terms with the Devil—Lord Salisbury would use another name—but the earth's great compromiser is man. Compromising with the Devil is not so dangerous as compromising with ourselves, and we do both every day. I have seven rabbits whose haunts I know, and twenty-seven, I have little doubt, laughing at me behind the others. How much do I spend annually in the war against them? Five shillings and sixpence—the price of one box of cartridges. Since my scoring rate is about one hit in four shots I am clearly not keeping pace with their multiplication.

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I AM delighted to know that a campaign has been started to make Canterbury a better world for wild ducks. I should like to be able to say a safer world, but that might be going too far. The promoters of the campaign, the North Canterbury Acclimatisation Society, say merely that their aim is

to help both the sportsman and the farmer, but although I can hardly claim to be one or the other, I am with them all the way till the guns go off. Even then I will not be against them. I will just hope that the shots will all miss. My version of the nursery rhyme would be something like this:

There was a little man, and he had a little gun,
And his bullets they were made of lead.
So he went to a brook, and he fired at a duck.
And this is what the grey duck said:
Quack! Quack! Quack! Quack!
Go and bag your head.

However, since I have never shot a duck or eaten one, I will not obstruct those who look forward to doing both. Though I am for live ducks only, I realise that dead ducks may increase the number of those still on the wing. Sportsmen want live ducks. I want live ducks. If everybody works for live ducks, both sides may get more of them, as farmers and lions both benefit from more lambs.

It is a fact, too, that the biggest threat to ducks is not the gun but the drag-line and the drain plough. Canterbury is becoming drier. Every country gets drier as ponds are emptied and swamps drained—as they must be where they are impeding production. But water in the wrong place can be moved to the right place, and it is the plan of the Acclimatisation Society to persuade farmers who can do it to create ponds in which ducks and other water birds can feed and dabble in the shelter of trees and shrubs. That is a prospect that fills me with happy thoughts and hopes, whatever the purpose behind it may be. But it fills me with sadness, too, since there is not, on my own little holding, one corner in which a pond or dam could safely be made.

(To be continued)

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 18, 1957.

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