

and they would certainly, in course of time, be wiped out from all our New Zealand islands which these birds inhabit if the boiling-down system should be practised.

10. Does that apply to all birds, or only to penguins?—Chiefly to penguins and albatrosses. These birds are so helpless on land that they make no attempt to get away from pursuit, either to walk or fly. If you were to put your boiling-down machine beside their rookeries you could catch as many as you like of them without effort.

11. *Sir George Grey.*] I should like Captain Fairchild to make some statement as regards the seals to be found on the islands?—As for the fur-seals, they are almost gone altogether; they are hardly worth thinking about now.

12. *The Chairman.*] Do you mean through the action of hunters?—Yes; a good many were killed a short time ago; but we never had many rookeries of them among the New Zealand islands—altogether, not more than about a dozen. But even from the few that are left the fur-seals have almost disappeared. They have gone, possibly, to some more southern land; but in places where there were large numbers of them to be seen, scarcely one is to be seen now. Sealers have been working them out from time to time; but they are nearly worked out in most of the places to which they used to resort.

13. Was that before stopping the practice by Act, or since?—Since the stopping by Act; they have been worked for several years since the passing of the Act. The persons concerned knew that to prevent them there would have to be a special vessel sent to watch them; and that was not done; so they worked the fur-seal until they worked him out almost altogether. But the sea-lion is numerous everywhere through the islands. They are not very valuable. They are worth about £1 each for skin and oil together.

14. Do they breed more frequently?—They do not breed fast. It has not been thought worth any one's while to kill the sea-lions. Besides, they are not so easy to kill as the fur-seal. When going after the fur-seal you need not take anything but your knife and a club. You could not destroy a sea-lion so easily. There are millions of them on the islands at one time of the year. They are as thick as sheep in a paddock at that particular season. You cannot walk over the grass in safety without clearing them out of your way. You must carry a stick with you to clear them out of your road. There is, however, one island off Westport where the fur-seal is still pretty numerous. People did not go to kill seals there when the law protected them. Those who would have done so were aware that they would be in sight of the people of the town of Westport and of the Cape Foulwind Lighthouse near there. There the seals are breeding fast. I counted fifty-four there last February. That is the only island that I know of where they are left in any considerable number. They are breeding there middling fast.

15. Could anything be done in the way of removing some of them to restock the other places?—That could be done, but I believe that, from the history of the seal, it is known he will not live in any place except where he is bred. He is known to go home very long distances. I am afraid that if you removed him he would come back again. As to those that have left the other islands, they were frightened away, and they are not likely ever to come home again. The smaller islands are pretty well depopulated so far as the fur-seal is concerned.

16. Would there be any probability of their stopping on D'Urville's Island if a number of them were brought there?—The fur-seal will not come near where people are: it is such a shy animal that wherever man lives he will not go; even where they are not molested, they do not care to live if men live near the place. With the sea-lion it is different: he will live in your garden if you let him alone. But the fur-seal—the moment he smells your presence he is like a wild animal—he is off like a shot. He does not care about coming back to that place if people are living beside him.

17. Do you think that temperature has anything to do with it?—Yes, I think that has something to do with it. I believe the fur-seal lived as far north as New Plymouth in the early days; but he will not live where people are living if he can help it.

18. What is the value of the fur-seal's skin?—About £3 for the undressed skin in London; but I believe the price has fallen to £2, and even £1 the last few years; £1 5s. is paid for dressing. The reason of the fall in price is because so many rabbit-skins have taken their place.

19. *Sir George Grey.*] Do you know anything of the sea-elephant?—The sea-elephants, if they are not protected, will soon be worked out. We have none of them, but on the Tasmanian islands they are to be found in thousands. We have sea-leopards, sea-lions, fur-seals, but not one sea-elephant. The Maquaries are full of sea-elephants. But the sea-elephants are more helpless than any other. You have nothing to do but go along and lance as many as you wish in a day: you may kill as many in a day as would take you three or four days to remove. In many places they are not as numerous as they were; and in these places, I believe, people engaged in this business are trying on with the penguins, because the sea-elephants have become scarce. It is a pity that Tasmania does not protect them. If not protected they must soon be wiped out altogether. There is one place on the west side of Macquarie Island where they reckoned upon 200 tons of sea-elephant oil if they could land there to take it; but they did not succeed, because they were not able to put down their launch. When the people engaged in this trade have exhausted the Maquaries there is little doubt they will try the islands belonging to New Zealand for penguins and albatrosses. If the boiling-down system is adopted, in a few years after that these birds will be wiped out altogether.

20. Is the Tasmanian Government taking no steps towards the protection of these animals?—I do not know, but it is no secret that Mr. Hatch, of Invercargill, is concerned in this business. In fact, he told me himself that he was going to give them a rest this year—he was going to give the sea-elephants a rest, and then going in for penguins.

21. What does he do with this oil?—He sells it; it is very good oil for some purposes—for machines for instance; machine-workers are very glad to get it.

22. You say the sea-elephants are more numerous at one time of year than another?—Yes, about every six months they come and go.