

sufficient importance for the adoption of special measures is shown by the following figures referring to the enormous ravages they have committed in the Australian Colonies :

The Parliament of Victoria provided money for the purpose of combatting the plague of rabbits to the extent of £1,280 in 1879-80, of £2,600 in 1880-81, and of £10,000, £12,000, £33,000, and £25,422 per annum in the following years, and will not be less this year because the pest has increased rather than decreased. The expenditure in New South Wales has been nearly £170,000 per annum for the past three years. In South Australia, notwithstanding the depression that existed, the expenditure from the passing of the 1885 Act to the 1st June, 1886, is given as £45,688, and in New Zealand nearly £40,000 has been spent annually for some time past. These are enormous sums to spend on rabbits, but then the havoc wrought by the rabbits is enormous. They eat up the grass and the herbage, and even strip the bark off all the edible shrubs and bushes, rendering it impossible to support sheep on the runs. I may add that a reward of £25,000 is offered by the New South Wales Government for an efficient means of destruction.

In carrying out the instructions of your Department I prevented the shipment to Canada of rags from infected countries.

Professor Sheldon has again visited the Dominion, and his extensive report will prove of great interest to intending emigrants and others. I am in constant receipt of enquiries from secretaries of Agricultural Associations and others, as to whether your Department will invite farmers' delegates during the coming year to visit the Dominion. A number of really first-class and thoroughly experienced men could be obtained from the various districts without much trouble.

Certainly no efforts ever made by the Government were followed by such good results as came from the visits of the delegates in 1879 and 1880. Those gentlemen still take a deep interest in the country and are always willing to afford information.

Their opinion carried great weight in their respective districts, and their reports are still actively enquired for.

The past year has been one of very low prices for phosphates. The total export from Montreal during 1887 has been 20,349 tons against 19,298 tons in 1886. Prices have rather gone back somewhat, owing to trade depression, and a large supply of low grade phosphates; 80 per cent. strengthened as the year advanced, and closed firm. The average price for the year is about 1 per cent. per unit, ex-ship, United Kingdom.

A good proportion has gone to Germany and also to Ireland at proportionately higher prices, but has not compensated for the additional freight that had to be paid.

Lower grades have been selling at 9½d. for 75 per cent., and 8d. for 70 per cent. The future outlook for Canadian phosphates is favourable, one shilling to 1s. 1½d. could now be obtained for 80 per cent. for this next season. There are slight signs of prices strengthening.

South Carolina phosphate (which is used largely by manufacturers here) has slightly varied in price. The average for the year is about 7½d. per unit ex-ship, United Kingdom.

Belgian phosphates have been sold at lower prices than hitherto, 40 to 45 per cent. ranging from 5d. to 6d., and 50 to 60 per cent. from 6½d. to 7½d. per unit ex ship here.

Of a newly discovered phosphate (Somme) only moderate quantities have as yet been offered, but sales have been made at 10½d. for 70 to 75 per cent. ex ship here.

The new source of phosphoric acid from basic slag has attracted considerable attention. This material contains somewhere about 17 per cent. of phosphoric acid, equal to 35 per cent. tribasic phosphate. It is found when reduced to fine powder to be easy of assimilation by plants, especially where the soil is of a peaty nature, and can supply the necessary carbonic acid to assist in the solution of the phosphate. In Germany the use of this has been rather large where there are big tracts of land, and it can be