

as it was done in parts of Scotland and in parts of Austria, a "vole plague"—that is, a tremendous increase in the numbers of meadow mice—occurred. To such an extent did these little rodents increase that the crops of whole districts were entirely destroyed. Further, the effect upon the game birds, in whose interests the killing of vermin was undertaken, was not what was expected. Instead of increasing in numbers, the game birds became a prey to disease, for the reason that the diseased and weakly individuals were no longer eliminated by predaceous birds and mammals, and thus spread disease far and wide. The balance of Nature is in reality a very fine one, and when man interferes with it the results usually recoil upon his own head."

### **Welcome Home Dinner to A.I.F. Members of R.A.O.U.**

THE Peace Dinner of the R.A.O.U., with its welcome to twelve members returned from service abroad with the A.I.F., was an unqualified success.

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Sir Baldwin Spencer, Col. H. W. Bryant, and Messrs. T. Dunbabin, W. Laidlaw, H. B. Hall, A. W. Milligan, H. Angwin, F. Keep, W. J. O'Neill, and H. G. Liscombe.

Each of the soldiers spoke in response to a toast, and an interesting evening, marking a memorable occasion in the history of the R.A.O.U., was spent. The Vice-President (Dr. J. A. Leach) occupied the chair. Reports of the soldiers' replies are rather incomplete.

The toasts honoured were:—

1. "The King."
2. "Our Fallen Comrades," proposed by Mr. A. J. Campbell, associated with the names of the nine members who had made the supreme sacrifice.
3. "The Navy," proposed by Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley and responded to by Commodore Cochrane.
4. "The Army (Permanent Forces)," proposed by Mr. J. A. Ross and responded to by Surgeon-General Sir Chas. Ryan, Col. (Dr.) G. Horne, and Major (Dr.) W. Macgillivray; 5. "The Army Medical (Voluntary)," responded to by Capt. G. Finlay, Sergeant Chas. Barrett, and Private L. G. Chandler; 6. "The Army (Scientific)," proposed by Mr. J. A. Kershaw and responded to by Major H. W. Wilson; 7. "The Army (Field Forces)," proposed by Mr. A. C. Stone and responded to by Capt. G. Anderson, Warrant-Officer M. A. Sullivan, Privates H. B. Slaney and W. M'Lennan; 8. "Women and the War," proposed by Dr. Brooke Nicholls, associated with the name of Nurse Bowie, and responded to by her uncle (Col. G. Horne); and (9) "Our Host," proposed by Mr. Z. Gray and responded to by Mr. C. E. Wilson.

To Mr. A. J. Campbell was entrusted the solemn and sublime toast—"In memory of the 'deathless' dead." The Great War to them had been merely an "interruption." They are yonder;

we are here. Or, as one simply and sympathetically said of her father hero—

"I cannot say, I will not say,  
That he is dead—he is just away;  
Think of him still as the same, and say,  
He is not dead—he is just away."

The company stood in reverence while the following names of departed members were announced alphabetically:—R. H. Eltis, D. B. Fry, R. Hutchinson, A. M'Kenzie Kirkwood, G. P. M'Kay, Maurice C. Thompson, H. Thonemann, General Sir W. Williams, and G. A. Young.

Sir Charles Ryan, who feelingly returned thanks, has had a unique and remarkable career. He was the oldest Surgeon-General in the field of the A.I.F.—probably in the whole of the Imperial Army. Sir Charles first saw service in the Russo-Turkish War (1877), in which he was a surgeon with the rank of major, and was through the strenuous times of the siege of Plevna. He told many truths which are "stranger than any fiction." He was at the awful but famous first landing, at dawn on the 25th April, 1915, at Gallipoli, with the Australians, and went through many bloody days and nights of experience there, succouring the wounded. During an armistice, at which 5,000 Turks were buried (he took many gruesome photographs of the field), Sir Charles strolled into "No Man's Land." Here an enemy officer detected the Australian surgeon wearing a Turkish decoration, and asked "Why?" When it was ascertained that the wearer was "Plevna Ryan" the Turkish officer (who was personally not very clean at the time) warmly embraced Sir Charles, and ordered the company of Turks to file past and salute Sir Charles. Sir Charles related several other interesting incidents which would lose poignancy if seen merely in cold type, but to be appreciated must be heard in breezy fashion from the Surgeon-General's own lips, as he only can tell the stories. Some of "the boys" became very homesick, and invented any excuse in order to return. Sir Charles had to examine 47 such. Seven were rejected as "unfit," and rejoiced accordingly, in marked contrast to the high-heaped abuse upon the good surgeon's pate of the 40 who had to return to duty.

Mr. (Sergeant) Charles Barrett said that he had served with the Australian Camel Field Ambulance in Egypt and Palestine. He was put out of action by malaria, and subsequently was appointed editor of the official journal and news bulletin of the A.I.F. and New Zealand Forces in Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia. He had seen much of the country. Bird-life was abundant in many localities. Wagtails—the white and the yellow species—Blue-throated Warblers, and other small birds were visitors to his "bivvy" in Palestine. Crested Larks, Wheatears, Hawks, Egyptian Vultures, &c., were noted further afield. In spring the Larks were singing everywhere. Before embarking for Australia he was granted leave for several weeks, and made a trip through the Nile Valley to the borders of Nubia. Later on

he hoped to contribute to *The Emu* some notes on the birds observed while on active service.

Mr. Harry B. Slaney said :—" Having listened to the anecdotes and remarks of the previous distinguished speakers, the necessity for a speech on my part makes me plead conscientious objections."

Major H. W. Wilson, O.B.E., M.C., who responded on behalf of scientists at the war, said, like many other scientific men with no previous military experience, he enlisted as a private in March, 1915, and sailed in July as a corporal. While crossing the Indian Ocean he was made a sergeant; but on joining up with his unit, the 6th Battalion, at Lemnos, became a full private. A few days later he became a lance-corporal. At Anzac he was a corporal. After the evacuation his unit went into the desert on the Suez Canal defence line. A few weeks later he was transferred to the 58th Battalion in the newly-formed 5th Australian Division as platoon sergeant. The training and endurance of the men were severely tested in the march from Tel-el-Kebir to Ferry Post, but Sergeant Wilson and his men came through the ordeal well. His unit again went into the desert to man the canal defences. Bird-life was very scarce, but what plant-life endured was exceedingly interesting. Spiders, lizards, and insects (especially beetles) were numerous, and wonderfully adapted to their desert life. In June, 1916, his unit was ordered to France. A few days after arriving in France he was chosen, on account of his technical knowledge, for the Second Army Gas School, to learn the principles and practice of gas warfare. A few weeks later he received his commission, and was made Gas Officer of the 5th Australian Division. In 1916, when the only protection from gas was the P.H. helmet, the work of a gas officer was light; but when the concentrations of gas sent over began to be too strong for the helmet to give protection, and the small box-respirator was introduced, the work of gas officers became much more arduous and important. When Corps Chemical Advisers were established, at the beginning of 1917, Lieut. Wilson was appointed Chemical Adviser of the 1st Anzac Corps (Australian Corps), and later in the year was promoted Captain. In June, 1918, when General Sir W. R. Birdwood took charge of the Fifth Army, Capt. Wilson was appointed Chemical Adviser on Fifth Army Headquarters Staff, and promoted to the rank of Major. After the armistice Major Wilson organized an agricultural chemistry school in the Institute of Chemistry, Lille, and assisted in organizing another at Roubaix. He acted as Commandant of the A.I.F. party at a teachers' conference for oversea soldier teachers, held in London under the auspices of the League of Empire in February, and shortly after embarked for Australia. He was mentioned in despatches for work with the Fifth Division on the Somme in 1916-17; was awarded the Military Cross, 3rd June, 1918, for work with the Australian Corps on the Somme and at Passchendaele; awarded the O.B.E. (military division), 3rd June, 1919, for work on the Somme with Australian Corps and the Fifth Army.