

several persons in Akaroa, have been in communication with the Government on the subject, and, although the success or otherwise of the experiment of introducing silk culture must ultimately rest with the settlers, it is fitting that the Government should in the initial stage give encouragement and assistance. It has been arranged, accordingly, through reliable and official channels, to obtain a consignment of eggs of the best quality of silkworms from Japan and California, also plants of the *morus alba*, the leaves of which variety of mulberry are preferred by the silkworms, and produce the best silks. Five hundred plants of the *morus alba* have recently been received from Sydney. They will be distributed in Christchurch and Akaroa, and, as there are already a sufficient number of leaf-bearing mulberry trees available in these places to begin with, although not all of the best sorts, Mr. Federli, on arrival of the eggs, will conduct the experiment at Christchurch of hatching them out, and feeding of silkworms, in a public place, so that all may have the opportunity of learning. From the produce of the first hatching out it is intended to send to Europe a portion of the eggs, and retain enough to extend the operations considerably the next season. Silk culture is a light cottage industry. The demand for eggs in France and Italy is very great, on account of a disease in those countries preventing the propagation of the silkworm. These countries import eggs from Japan and China to the value of millions sterling yearly.

CROWN LANDS HELD ON PASTORAL LEASE OR LICENSE.

The total area held is 12,382,614 acres, in 946 runs, all in the Middle Island, with the exception of 33 runs, comprising 260,215 acres, in the North Island. The question of the future disposal of 2,681,000 acres of this area, held in 90 runs in Otago and Southland, the leases of which expire in March, 1883, has been considered by the Government and the Land Board of Otago, as regards the country in that district; and it has been proposed, after making suitable reserves for public purposes, and regard been had to gold mining interests, which represent an industry exporting half a million sterling per annum, to apportion the flat arable lands in hundreds, for agricultural settlement, and the hilly and mountainous country in runs, of a size that will be determined by the features of the country; each run, as near as may be, will be of a depth twice the breadth, and will extend, in its longest dimension, from the valley to the summit of the range. After Parliament has had the proposals under consideration, and the principle of procedure has been finally decided on, it will be advisable, either in a special pamphlet or in the next issue of the Crown Lands Guide, to specially describe the character of this extensive area for the information of persons both in the colony and elsewhere who may be in quest of land to settle on, for the districts are so very sparsely populated that there is room for a considerable inflow of settlers. At present there are only about 7,000 persons, inclusive of miners, shepherds, tradesmen and their families, occupying an area of upwards of 3,000,000 acres, or considerably less than two persons to the square mile. It is therefore manifest that this handful of people can never be supposed to be equal to the settlement of so extensive an area within the next eighteen months, unless their numbers are recruited from without. In connection with this matter it ought to be mentioned that 12 runs, comprising 330,000 acres of education reserves, will also have to be dealt with at the same time; the administration is with the School Commissioners, but, as the dealing with all these lands is one, so far as the public is concerned, it would be well to consult the Commissioners as to their intentions, so that the public might have notice of the whole 3,011,000 acres at one time.

RABBIT PEST.

Closely connected with the settlement of the country is the difficulty of coping with this evil. It can be kept under by poisoning, shooting, and introduction of natural enemies, but where there is a region of broken back-country, the contest has to be maintained from season to season at great expense, which is only partially met by the sale of skins. The carrying capacity of the infested country is of course seriously diminished, and some of the higher-lying runs have been abandoned altogether very much from this cause. This in itself would not be so material, were it not that the abandoned country becomes the breeding-ground for fresh hordes, which overrun the lower occupied country. It is manifest that any partial treatment is unequal to the suppression of an evil which now affects several millions of acres of Crown and freehold lands. Rigorous concerted action is necessary; and this cannot be expected of district associations, unless under the compulsion and direction of one authority. It therefore devolves on Government to possess itself of powers that will require every person to keep his ground clear on pain of severe penalties. This implies that Government must clear the unoccupied Crown lands; and if these measures succeed in reducing the pest to small dimensions, as certainly they would, the expense would be far more than recouped in the increased carrying capacity of the country, and the greater rentals that would be got in re-letting. Increasing the number of runs and holdings will in one way tend to diminish the evil by having more persons to contend against it; but in the increase of settlers, there will be still greater need for Government inspection of rabbit districts, because the neglect of two or three persons in a district to keep their ground clear would render abortive in a great measure the efforts of those who did.

IMPROVEMENT OF LANDS BEFORE SALE.

Under this heading are comprehended the felling and clearing of road lines through bush country, side cuttings, formations, bridges, and outfall drains, or such works as render the