

holes. I lost as many as 70 sheep in one hole. Then the impounding of cattle is another difficulty, as we are not permitted to impound cattle off unfenced land. My manager lately took a number of them a long distance to the pound. The man sued him, and he lost the case. The rabbits on the neighbouring runs where the owners are in difficulties have greatly increased of late, as they have also on the Government reserves. For some years past I have been under the impression that a piece of land on the Lee Stream belonged to Mr. Shand, and I spoke to the Rabbit Inspector about it. Mr. Shand now informs me that the land in question is a Government reserve for grazing stock. The County Council and local rates are based on the rental paid to the Government, which is manifestly unfair. When I took the run I had the use of about 8,000 acres of low-lying land, part of which I have since had to rent from various Municipal Councils, as they were endowments. I had not calculated on this when I took the runs. I have also had to rent privately about 1,700 acres of freehold property, to put some of the ewes upon in lambing. The total number of sheep shorn on the station this last year was 18,631. I got 4,530 lambs from 10,176 ewes. The working expenses are about 1s. 9d. per sheep, without taking the rabbits into account. The loss of sheep and the expenses consequent on rabbits I put down at from 9d. to 1s. per sheep. The value of wool at port of shipment is about 3s. In my case it is 3s. 6d., but I cannot sell any of the merino carcasses. The increase only just exceeds the losses. Since I took the runs I have leased low country from municipal bodies to the extent of 4,830 acres. The private freehold rented by me in grass is 1,700 acres, and my own freehold 2,900; making a total of 9,430 acres. The run without the freehold and the low-lying leasehold would not in my opinion carry more than 12,000 sheep, and from these I should not get any lambing; and for this I pay rent to the Government to the extent of £1,475, and taxes amounting to £75 17s. 1d., making a total payment of £1,550 17s. 1d. for the gross of 12,000 sheep, which is equal to 2s. 9d. per head. This, taken from the net value of the wool, leaves about 9d. for expenses of management and rabbiting. I reckon that the 9d. just pays for the rabbiting, so that the loss is equal to from 1s. 9d. to 2s. per head, or say from £1,000 to £1,200 a year. With regard to the sale by auction: I may mention that I had arranged with another gentleman to bid for me. He stood some distance at the back. The arrangement was that so long as I kept my hat on he should go on bidding, and when I took it off he should stop. He bid for Run 259, which was, I think, put up at the upset rental of £100 a year. He bid £110 for it, and it was knocked down to me. I walked forward from where I was standing, some distance off; I took the pen in my hand, and was prepared to sign the agreement, when some one in the body of the auction room (the Garrison Hall) called out words to this effect: "Why, you fool, if you had not been in such a hurry I would have given you more." And a person standing in a far corner of the room, thinking it was another run that was put up, bid £400. The gentleman I had employed to bid for me bid £415, and it was knocked down to me. I may say that I had been letting this run for £100 per annum for six or eight years previously, for running cattle on, as it was unfit for sheep. When the man bid £400 a year for the run, I said, "You are mad," and still kept my hat on. My friend bid £415, and it was knocked down to him, to my intense astonishment. I was perfectly unaware of the circumstance at the time. The next run, with the low-lying country adjoining my freehold, was run up to £1,075 a year, from the upset price of from £450 to £500 a year. I think the people thought it would carry more sheep than it did. I had been careful of my sheep. I brought rams from England and other places; I never spared expense on the rams. I find that I sublet Run 259 in former years at £80 a year. I gave £1,075 for Run 186, thinking that I should still retain the use of the low lands and the Municipal Endowments, and that by growing turnips extensively I should be able to carry a large number of sheep. I based my calculations on the then price of wool; and I am afraid I lost my head, not liking to part with a run adjoining my freehold that had been so many years in my possession. We had a snow storm on the 5th November last (1885), and most of my lambs were killed. I have not had any interest on my capital for several years. My loss for this year on working expenses is about £1,117 16s. 11d., and taking interest into consideration, but deducting therefrom the value of increased number of stock, £2,287 1s. 9d. [Statement of accounts handed in.]

480. What was your lambing?—About 40 to 45 per cent.

481. What was it for the last few years?—We varied from 65 to 45. I have had as many as 70 in former years.

482. *Mr. Lake.*] Have you got in the accounts anything to show the relative losses or profits during the last three years?—No; I was not prepared to give evidence.

483. What difference did the result of these sales of the runs make to you?—I was paying before an average rental of £680 a year. I am now paying for less country a total of £1,822 per annum.

484. To what do you attribute your losses—to the increased rentals?—No, not to the increased rentals; but to the difficulty with the miners' cattle, and my neighbours allowing their rabbits to increase enormously.

485. You say the rabbits are the cause?—Yes; they cost me from 9d. to 1s. a sheep in expenses and losses.

486. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] What number of sheep have you shorn?—I have shorn some 18,631 last year.

487. How much of your present loss is due entirely to diminished value of stock, and how much to the extra price you had to give owing to the subdivision of the runs?—My losses are £921 a year. I make it up this way: Extra losses on sheep in consequence of my having been obliged to shift them backwards and forwards owing to the diggers' holes. I have so much less low country; I have to keep on the high country, and we get many of the sheep smothered. I lost 1,800 extra sheep in consequence of my not getting the low land with the other runs.

488. How did you lose the low-lying country—was it let separately?—It was taken for the Caversham Endowment, West Harbour Endowment, Green Island Endowment, and several others.

489. And you could not re-lease it?—I have re-leased 5,000 acres of it; but a number of other people have rented portions, which have now passed away from me.