

country, where, although the soil may be good, only certain portions are arable, the hill-sides and gullies being only suitable for pasture.

CROWN LANDS HELD ON PASTORAL LEASE OR LICENSE.

By way of distinction from the small grazing-runs, it may be as well to explain that on pastoral lease the tenant has the right to the pasture only—the lease gives no right to crop the soil; but there is no restriction as to the area of a run or the number of runs one lessee may hold.

An area of over eleven million acres is held in 1,246 leases, at an average rental of 3½d. an acre. The rents, with the exception of a few hundred pounds, have all been paid to date. But the low price of wool, the rabbit-pest, and the weight of monetary engagements entered into in more prosperous times are now telling very adversely on some of the lessees. Applications have been made for remission of rents, which it is impossible to grant, for the State cannot act as a private landlord might do in such an emergency.

An area of 354,763 acres was let during the year in forty runs. It was mostly high back-lying country, and let at rents under the average. More recently a few runs in the better country of Otago have been relet at a very considerable advance on the upset price. This, however, can hardly be taken as an indication of the paying nature of runholding at present, for there were exceptional circumstances in the cases referred to which induced competition at the auction sales.

THERMAL SPRINGS.

A few years ago the difficulties of travel and the lack of accommodation prevented all but the more adventurous travellers from visiting the hot springs, and the blessings of their curative properties were only experienced by a few. The extension of the railway-system during the year has done a great deal to render them more accessible; thus the Te Aroha Springs, which only four or five years ago were not accessible even by road, and whose existence was only known to a few, are now reached from Auckland by railway in a few hours. The opening of the last section of railway on the 1st March has caused a very marked increase in the number of visitors. Similarly the opening of the railway to Oxford has reduced the coaching distance from Auckland to Rotorua to 34 miles; and the completion of the line the whole distance will bring the wonders of that region within the easy reach of the multitudes who will flock thither for health and recreation, and to view the scenes of the recent volcanic eruptions.

It is very satisfactory to note that, in the great eruptions of Tarawera and Rotomahana on the 10th June, 1886, no apparent injury has been done to the springs around Rotorua. Dr. Ginders reports regarding them: "Springs here increased in temperature and volume since eruption. Blue Bath Cauldron, average mean temperature before eruption, 165° Fah.; since, 180°. Rachel Cauldron, before, 175°; since, 192°. Priest, mean temperature for March, 90°; April, 99°; May, 97°; June 1st to 10th, 98°; 10th to 30th, 96°. Lake, 8 inches over highest winter level, preventing free outflow from Priest. On fall of Lake, expect Priest's temperature to rise. Outflow from all three springs doubled in amount. On the whole, consider eruption has benefited springs."

Contracts have been entered into for a cold-water supply for Rotorua sufficient to supply public baths and fountains and a town of ten thousand inhabitants.

The hot springs at Hanmer Plain, in the Middle Island, have also been brought more within reach by the opening of the railway to Culverden, reducing the coaching-distance to twenty-four miles on a ninety-mile journey from Christchurch. These springs, which were practically unknown to the public only a year or two ago, are rapidly becoming known, and to meet the public demands it will be necessary to increase the number of baths. The existing accommodation for lodging visitors is inconvenient and not equal to the present and prospective requirements of the place. This is likely soon to be remedied by the erection close to the springs of extensive accommodation: proposals are now before the department for a sixty-three-years' lease of a site of seven acres under section 2 of the Land Act of 1885.

The Te Aroha and Hanmer Springs are on Crown lands, and the Rotorua are on Native land managed by the Government. The hot springs are looked upon not only as a priceless boon which nature has conferred on the inhabitants of New Zealand, but also as the healing-waters—the Bethesda—for all who may come from distant lands to seek restoration of health.

The erection of bathhouses and other equipment of these Sanitoria have therefore been