

and up the Magdalene Valley to the Lewis, Doubtful, and Boyle Rivers. All the country on the south side of the Hope River is fairly free from bush till near the top, and the tussock on this country is of good quality, well mixed with English grasses. Some of the facings where the bush has been burnt off here have not taken the English grasses well; other patches have taken the surface-sown grasses very well. In this country the north facings lie well to the sun, and should be fairly safe winter country. The country up the River Waiau has nearly all been burnt bush, surface-sown, and the cocksfoot and clovers seem in most places to have done very well. This is also safe country. Along the Magdalene Valley, although very picturesque, yet the country about here and along to the Boyle River could not be considered winter country. Farther down the Boyle to the junction of the Hope River, the country, where there is no bush, is nice, warm, good lambing country. A large part of this run we did not inspect, as our limit of time would not allow. We were informed, however—I think on reliable authority—that we had inspected all the country on this run that, from a grazing point of view, was worth inspecting. I should think from what we saw and learned that there cannot be much more than 45,000 acres of grass-land—probably not that—on this run. The rest is covered with birch, mostly of inferior quality, with the exception of a few patches of very good red-birch. Most of the grass country back from the point I have already mentioned is high hill country, covered with carpet grass. This country, from its altitude, can only be made use of for a few months in the autumn—that is, the high hill-tops. There are small patches of good grasses in the valleys that can only be utilized by cattle; but any cattle put to graze on this country must be quiet cattle, brought on to the ground, and not left too long in one place. To breed cattle in this country would be simply to let them go wild, and it would be impossible to get them off the country. Can this run be subdivided? It could, and from the ruins of more than one old homestead it must in the past have actually been worked in two or three different runs. Can it be profitably subdivided now? That is another question, and I am very doubtful about it. The present lessee has made freehold every acre of the Hope Valley that is any good, and a good deal that is not much good, and that would be used as new homestead-sites. The rivers up here are rough and rapid, and make it very awkward—in fact, almost impossible—to work without bridges. There is one private bridge belonging to the present lessee that I understand cost £1,200 to erect; he has also other bridges. The improvements on this run in the shape of rabbit-proof fences, tracks, bridges, and the necessary acquiring of the freehold—or, at any rate, part of it—for homestead-sites, would make it almost impossible for the ordinary sheep-farmer to venture on the run. Besides, for a good few miles from the homestead there is no road, all the wool having to be packed out and the station requirements packed in. And, after all, although it is beautiful sweet country, yet it is subject to heavy snowfalls, and occasionally there is heavy mortality amongst the sheep. I understand the present lessee takes all his young stock down country in the winter. Further, the rabbit-proof fence running through this very rough country costs a good deal to maintain, and it is not only a benefit to the lessee, but also a benefit to a great part of Canterbury. It is necessary, therefore, to have lessees who will be most vigilant in looking after the fence and the rabbits. No man could be more vigilant than the present lessee. After carefully weighing the good and bad points of this run from every side, I am forced, though very reluctantly, to recommend it to be leased again as one run for fourteen years. I did not inspect it sufficiently to be able to state a fair rent for the future, but certainly I think it is worth more than the present rental.

This is the last run we inspected.

WINTER FEED.

In my opinion the growing of turnips for winter feed will yet be the most important factor in saving the sheep during heavy snowfalls. I do not mean the turnips to be grown and eaten off the ground in the usual way, but that they be grown and stored in heaps, and securely covered with earth before the winter begins. Then, when the snowstorm comes, they are easily sledged out on the tracks made by the snow-ploughs; and if the sheep are given these, with a little hay, there will practically be no danger of the usual mortality that takes place when feeding on dry hay alone. If no snow comes, the fresh, sound, frostless turnips will well repay for spring feed the trouble of carefully storing them away from the winter frosts. (As every one knows, when turnips get thoroughly frosted through there is not nearly the same nutriment in them.)

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In conclusion, I might mention that, although the subdivisions on the country we have inspected do not seem many for the large area of country concerned, yet it must be pointed out that in most cases the runs are the worst of all the Canterbury runs. The Crown lands that we have passed along the frontage of the agricultural lands, such as Orari Gorge, Mount Peel, Mount Possession, and many others of the same class, will cut up in considerably smaller blocks, and with more safety than those we have dealt with.

Further, I think it is a great pity that the great tracts of good Education reserves scattered all over Canterbury could not be also utilized in this way, in conjunction with the Crown lands. If this were done it would very materially increase the population of Canterbury.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Minister of Lands, Wellington.

ROBERT GUTHRIE.

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