

THE UPPER ASHBURTON AND RAKAIA GROUP.

The area included in the Upper Ashburton and Rakaia group comprises the high and broken country extending easterly from the head-waters of the Rangitata River to the Rakaia River, and north-westerly to the Southern Alps. Within this country is an approximate area of 350,500 acres, of which about 127,000 acres consist of barren and worthless country—bare rock and shingle faces. By far the greater part of the country is over 4,000 ft. in altitude. It is for the most part composed of the same rocks as those of the back Mackenzie country—viz., tilted sandstones and slates, and, like the Mackenzie, presents physical characteristics modified in scale and nature by local circumstances, and is undergoing similar disintegration. Thus, as in the alpine regions of the Mackenzie country, steep valleys, broken by gorges and shingle slides, open into the comparatively level basins of the Upper Rangitata and Upper Ashburton Plains, including the Lake Heron and Lakes Tripp and Ackland Valleys. Lake Heron, which lies near the centre of the Upper Ashburton pastoral area, between the south branch of the Ashburton River and the Rakaia River, is 2,267 ft. above sea-level. Lakes Tripp and Ackland, which lie between the south branch of the Ashburton River and the Rangitata River, are 2,193 ft. and 2,149 ft. respectively above sea-level. The three lakes mentioned—Heron, Tripp, and Ackland—are respectively 170 ft., 244 ft., and 288 ft. lower than Lake Tekapo, which is the highest lake in the Mackenzie country. Resembling also somewhat in configuration a portion of the Mackenzie country, the Upper Ashburton and Rakaia country is perhaps better grassed, but is, however, difficult of access, and deficient in warm country, with the exception of the areas comprised in Double Hill runs, which extend along the northerly faces of the Rakaia River for a distance of twenty-four miles, and are excellently grassed. The unequal distribution of the winter and summer country, and the great preponderance of the latter over the former throughout the Upper Rangitata, the Potts, and the Upper Ashburton Rivers, constitute practical difficulties in the way of further subdivision of the runs, except in the case of the two Double Hills runs above referred to. These runs can be profitably subdivided.

THE SELWYN GROUP.

The area included in the Selwyn group is 36,000 acres, including 13,000 acres of barren country. This country is comprised in three separate areas, one lying between Lake Coleridge and the Rakaia River, another near the head-waters of the Harper River, and the other near the head-waters of the Selwyn River. The first-mentioned is a small, serviceable, well-grassed run of good aspect, and close to a main road. The other areas consist of high and broken inaccessible fragments of waste lands, valueless except for summer grazing.

THE WAIPARA AND AMURI GROUP.

The area included in the Waipara and Amuri Group occupies the high, partly open, and partly bush-clad country situated on the boundary between the Land Districts of Nelson and Canterbury, falling easterly towards and covering all the country drained by the Nina, Doubtful, Hope, Boyle, and Kakapo Rivers, as far as the Waiau River. This country contains 235,000 acres, of which 133,000 acres consist of forest and shingle tops. The general altitude varies from about 2,000 ft. to 6,000 ft., rough and comparatively inaccessible, yet carrying excellent sheep and cattle pasture. This country has many characteristics which, if turned to account by practical pastoralists, will result in profit to the Crown and to the tenant. The Glynnwye portion of the group is suitable for subdivision.

TERM OF LEASE OF THE RUNS.

After mature consideration, we have determined to recommend that the term of lease of the pastoral runs be fixed at fourteen years. Hitherto the usual term of lease of purely pastoral country has been twenty-one years. Previous to 1907 there was some justification for a twenty-one-years license, seeing