

holme lost £11,000 or £12,000 in the transaction, which they were in a good way of getting back, because the sheep were doing well year after year.

22. Was this poison plant widely distributed?—As far as we could tell it was distributed only on the Waimarino Plains.

23. On the plains was it widely distributed?—Yes, over the greater portion of it, so far as we could find. Probably the worst part was immediately under Mount Ruapehu: that is at the south-eastern portion of the run.

24. Was it a native plant, or had it been introduced?—It was a native plant.

25. *Mr. MacDonald.*] What year was that in?—I went up at the end of 1879, and it was just about Christmas or New Year time.

26. At what period was the run abandoned?—I think it was about 1884, but am not positive about that, because I have a very bad memory for figures.

27. It was in 1884 when Mr. Bryce's Land Act was passed prohibiting any dealings in more than 5,000 acres?—That was the year then, no doubt, but I had forgotten the fact. It was after that Act was passed.

28. *Mr. Laurenson.*] You said that wheat was grown there?—No, on the delta of the Tongariro River, about Tokaanu.

29. Do you know how many bushels to the acre?—No, I do not; but the astonishing thing to me, knowing a little bit about farming, was that when I went to Tokaanu first they were growing wheat and getting very fair crops. They had been growing wheat on the same land for fifteen years without rotation, and any farmer knows that that is a most astonishing thing. They grew wheat until they sickened the whole country. They simply ruined the land so far as wheat-growing was concerned.

30. *Mr. Buchanan.*] Are you aware that in England, on what they call the Rothamstead Experimental Farm, they have grown wheat for forty years in succession?—Not without artificial aid in the way of manures?

31. Without any manure; the only aid to the crop was cultivation and suppression of weeds?—I have not heard of it.

32. *Mr. Laurenson.*] You said there were 200,000 acres of land in that big area and twenty thousand sheep; that is one sheep to 10 acres: was that its carrying-capacity?—No, it was not; but, quite naturally, until they had some title they were not going to thoroughly stock the land. As a matter of fact, I suppose, taking that land as it stands to-day—and it has never been stocked since—no one ever stocks it; it is lying idle—I should say you could not carry more than one sheep to the 2 acres.

33. That is without artificially dealing with the land?—Yes.

34. *Mr. Buick.*] You said you saw good wheat growing at Tokaanu: how much land do you think is capable of growing a crop of wheat?—If it were cleared I should say the majority of the land. I bicycled through there about four years ago, and it seemed to me that the land was exactly in the same condition as it was thirty-two years ago. There were small clearings here and there and heavy manuka scrub. There is a class of manuka which denotes good land, and another class which denotes poor land; but there was heavy manuka scrub there. I should say that if it were cleared, and a certain amount of drainage done—because it is only a few feet above the level of Lake Taupo—good results could be obtained. I think 7,000 acres and upwards of it is all first-class land. And the hills surrounding the south end of the lake for miles are as good land as could be found in any part of New Zealand. From Pihunga round to the old Mission Station at Pukawa—probably twenty-five miles—the whole of those slopes from the top of the ranges to Buchanan are absolutely first class, and just as good as any land you have in the Wairarapa. When I first went there the bulk of it was very heavy bush, with no black-birch except on the top of the ranges. When you go on the other side of the desert, as it is called, you practically get nothing but black-birch; but, as I have said, I am speaking of what it was originally. There is a large quantity left of very good bush containing totara, matai, and rimu, with good trees running up to 3 ft. in diameter. In the early days when I went there there was only a Maori track, but when the Government started to make roads they let contracts for bridging and building, and the timber used was some of the finest totara I have seen in New Zealand. Many thousands of acres consisted of heavy fern with just the stumps sticking up. It was originally heavy bush, and the Maoris cultivated it for their gardens, but a fire got into it and it spread. It was never scrub country, but heavy bush country with a first-class soil. I do not think there is anything in the Wairarapa to beat those slopes for twenty or twenty-five miles.

35. Do you consider that if this country were made accessible by rail it could be profitably worked?—That opens up a very large question, because we have not the population to work it. If the population were there I think a large portion of that country would be regarded as the garden of New Zealand.

36. Speaking of the poison plant, is it confined to high altitudes?—I cannot tell. I only know of it on that particular portion of the country—that is, roughly, about 2,500 ft. above sea-level.

37. Is it in the nature of a shrub?—No, it is a small trefoil running among the native grass, and it never grows more than about an inch in height.

38. *Mr. Laurenson.*] You said you ran a schooner on the lake: was there enough traffic to warrant it?—We ran it chiefly in the interest of the run and our store, and for the Natives.

39. Would a railway down to the north end of the lake, such as is suggested, enable settlers all round to be put into communication with the railway?—I do not think there are many settlers, but I honestly think that if the line were extended to Taupo it would make for settlement. I have no doubt a lot of the country would be taken up if settlers could get there. It used to cost us 3d. per pound for everything we got from Auckland or Tauranga—it did not matter what it was. If that line is carried along as far as Lake Taupo I think it will undoubtedly give a very