

799. What fruit trees grew there?—There were fruit trees at the Rainbow which grew very well. They were only three or four years old when I left. I believe they are growing there now. I never protected or sheltered them.

800. Of the 70,000 or 80,000 acres, how much would be suitable for the growth of cereals and vegetables?—There is not a very great deal of what I should call agricultural land. There are open valleys, such as Mr. Fowler describes, but they are not of very great extent. You could get farms here and there in each of them.

801. Supposing there were road or railway communication, would the country be suitable for settlement by small farmers?—I think so; and they would make a very good living in those valleys.

802. Have you tried English grass?—No. There are scores of acres of English grass there. At Saxton's old station there is English grass growing well; in fact we mowed it for hay.

803. Does clover grow there?—Yes; it grows well and luxuriantly on good land. It would not be seen at this season of the year. The spring only begins on 1st November.

804. Supposing there were railway communication, and the country thrown open for settlement, do you think it would be settled?—I think these good valleys would be taken up.

805. Why have they not been taken up already?—They cannot take them up, as they are all under lease.

806. Supposing they were not under lease, would they be taken up without a railway or better communication?—No, unless you could get 2,000 or 3,000 acres; then it would readily be taken up.

807. Supposing a considerable market were to spring up in the neighbourhood, or a gold field were found at the Rainbow, would the country be settled?—The country would then be taken up fast enough. There is some really good land up the Rainbow River in patches. From the want of roads settlement would be impossible.

808. *The Chairman.*] How long is it since you have seen the Tarndale country?—Two years.

809. Does it still preserve its character as a fattening country?—I have not been there. There was never a year I did not sell fat sheep and cattle; I always kept them till the spring of the year.

810. Is there anything in the regulations of the Nelson Province which prevents land being taken up for settlement notwithstanding its being held under lease?—No one can get it. We leased the land for fourteen years with the right to renew the lease for fourteen more years. Only the man who had the lease could purchase. He can only purchase the land in blocks,

811. Then the country is practically closed?—Practically closed to everybody but sheep-farmers.

812. *Mr. Fulton.*] Has there been any agitation to have it thrown open for settlement?—I never heard of any agitation.

813. *Mr. Fell.*] Would there be the slightest use in its being thrown open for settlement unless there were a readier means of access than now exists?—No, it would be good for nothing except for stock. If you grew wheat you would have to send it a long distance to the mill. Through the want of an accessible market it would be no advantage to the grower.

Mr. DONALD MCGREGOR, Upper Buller, examined.

814. *Mr. Fell.*] You now reside at the Upper Buller?—I have a small cattle run there.

815. I believe for three different years you worked for the Provincial Government on road contracts between the Hanmer Plains and Tophouse?—Yes, some twenty years ago. I was four years there altogether, when the country was very rough and unopened. I lived in a calico tent all the time and during the winter.

816. You did not get frost-bitten?—No; I was not afraid of being frost-bitten.

817. What is your native place?—I came from Caithness, the northernmost county in Scotland.

818. I suppose you are tolerably well acquainted with the country about the Acheron?—Yes, I confined my operations mainly to the valleys near the road. I crossed the lateral valleys.

819. Is the climate and soil such as would render it reasonable to suppose that a population could exist there?—I think it is a very good climate. We had to pack all our goods and provisions from the Nelson side of the Big Bush. The packers were sometimes stopped by bad weather, whilst on the Acheron and the Clarence we had no rain whatever. The climate in the Acheron is better than lower down; there is less rain.

820. Supposing it were opened up by railway, are the conditions of climate and country such as would make it possible for a population to thrive there?—It would depend partly on what they attempted to grow. I do not think it would be suitable for fruit-growing on account of the altitude. The seasons are very uncertain in those high altitudes.

821. What would you grow?—I should try grass if I got enough ground.

822. What would the valleys be capable of growing?—You could get a living out of them; it would depend on the quantity of land you got. I do not think small farms would do well there. Taking the country generally, as a whole, I think it is a pastoral country. It is a magnificent grazing country. I have not seen the country of late years. The only vegetable we could get to eat was a large kind of spear-grass. I did not attempt to grow strawberries and currants. I was there in 1858, 1859, and 1860—the early days of the district.

823. *The Chairman.*] Have you seen as much winter in this country as in Caithness? Which is the better climate, the one you left at Home or the one here?—This is a vastly superior climate in the winter. The climate in the winter at Tarndale is nearly as good as the summer in Caithness.

Mr. JONATHAN BROUGH, Nelson, examined.

824. *Mr. Fell.*] I believe you have been engaged at Tarndale on road contracts since April, 1881?—Yes.

825. You have lived there in tents ever since?—Yes.

826. You know the country about Tarndale and the Rainbow?—Yes.

827. What crops or cultivations are there at the Rainbow?—There are some cultivations at the Rainbow in the shape of vegetable and fruit gardens. They grow black and red currants, strawberries, apples, raspberries, peas, ordinary vegetables, and potatoes. I have potatoes growing in the gorge, and