

The ordinary diggers are scattered all about the country in small lots; there is scarcely an old diggings anywhere on which an odd man or two cannot be found earning a living. Although in most cases the present condition of things is a mere shadow of the past, there is ample proof everywhere that no one need be unemployed if the surplus labour could only be applied to gold-digging in this way.

After the large sluicing claims at Kumara, Ross, and Humphrey's Gully, the principal alluvial diggings at present in active operation are Rimu, Waimea, Maori Creek, Nelson Creek, Barrytown, and Charleston. The quartz reefs in operation are all situated at Reefton, Boatman's, Lyell, and Mokihinui. Coal is mined at Reefton for local demands; but the principal seats of the industry are Greymouth and Westport, where a large export trade is carried on with all parts of the colony.

*Other Industries.*—Leaving out the commercial interests which depend on the producing-power of the country, the only other industry on the West Coast that requires special notice is saw-milling. Some years since, when there was more direct communication with Melbourne, a small export trade in timber was established, and before railways were carried into other timber districts there was a large trade coastwise. All this outside trade has fallen off greatly of late years, and now the industry is confined to the local market and an occasional shipment to the East Coast. According to Mr. Kirk, there are at present about 18 saw-mills of various capacities at work on the West Coast; but they are not all working full time. The total yearly output is estimated at 5,500,000 superficial feet, and they give employment to about 150 men.

## LAND.

### PASTORAL LAND.

*Area.*—As shown on Map No. 2, and hereinbefore mentioned, the open pastoral lands affected by the proposed railway are estimated at 1,220,500 acres. This does not include either of the following: lands now used for pasture which can be converted into arable land, mountain-tops and other waste lands of little or no value, rough forest lands which may become fit for pasture at some remote time, when the bush is cleared.

*Character.*—The character of the ordinary pastoral country in Canterbury, Marlborough, and Nelson is much the same as in other parts of the Middle Island—open tussock lands, affording good pasture in the river-flats, but getting gradually poorer as higher levels are reached. There is a great similarity in most of the river-beds throughout the Middle Island. The Waiho on the west side of the range is little different from the Rangitata on the east, and the head-waters of the Grey are much the same as the head-waters of the Hurunui. There is little or no vegetation on the mountain-tops, where the snow lies long in winter, and some of the steeper slopes and shingle-slips are in the same condition. The mountains in Marlborough and Nelson are not so steep as the Canterbury ones; consequently they carry the good pasture further up, particularly on the northern side.

The ordinary pasture-lands above referred to are not capable of much improvement. Surface-sowing might be resorted to with advantage in a few isolated spots, but, as a rule, the present vegetation is the best that the country will give.

On the western side of the range there are a number of small patches of open country, shown on the maps as arable land, which are at present used for pasture. They amount in the aggregate to about 100,000 acres, and are of two classes—upland valleys and river-flats, and the pakihis of the lowlands. Bruce's paddock, on the Teremakau, and the Ahaura and Addison's Flats are examples of the latter. The upland valleys have generally very good soil, and give rich pasture. I have never seen finer cattle nor more of them on any natural pasture than I saw this summer on Mr. Macgregor's station in the Tutaki Valley. The pasture on the pakihis is generally poor. The land is very patchy: clay, shingle, and loam predominate in turns; but, even in the latter case, some of the essentials of good soil seem to be wanting.

As already stated, no account is taken herein of rough bush country which may ultimately become pasture lands. Ordinary hill-sides that are denuded of forest sometimes become very bare and sterile, particularly in the poorer upland districts, where mountain-birch has grown; but in some of the lower ranges, where limestone predominates, grass will grow on the steepest slopes. An instance of this occurs in the Buller Valley, below the Inangahua Junction. Under those circumstances some of the rough bush country may in time become pasture lands.

### AGRICULTURAL LAND.

There is no subject connected with the proposed railways which has evoked so much discussion as the character of the land on the West Coast. I shall therefore endeavour to give all the bearings of the question.

*Area.*—Map No. 1 shows the arable land in the country affected by the proposed railways, divided, irrespective of quality, into two classes—namely, arable flat lands and arable hilly lands. The following table, computed under my directions, gives their approximate areas:—

	Flat.	Hilly.	Total.
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.
1. Canterbury	34,400	6,800	41,200
2. Westland	269,300	202,000	471,300
3. Western Nelson	482,800	90,500	573,300
4. Northern Nelson	98,200	152,500	250,700
5. Marlborough	77,000	78,800	155,800
Totals	961,700	530,600	1,492,300