

SCRUB LAND.

ITS EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION TO BE TESTED.

A LARGE extent of land in the Waimakariri and West Eyreton districts of Canterbury is not in profitable occupation. Its character is peculiar. The chief feature in the formation is a mixture of gravel and sand, more or less covered with soil, these combining in varying proportions. The open nature of the substratum can retain water but feebly. This is general over the whole of the area, and is naturally the cause of the difficulty of useful occupation. Where the soil is in reasonable proportion good crops are raised in seasons of abundant rainfall. Where the boulder and gravel are in the greater proportion the natural vegetation is reduced to manuka, a certain amount of danthonia, and grey moss.

Some of the owners have approached the Department with a request to test plants and methods of cultivation that may assist to provide profitable utilization. With this in view the South Island Fields Instructor, Mr. A. Macpherson, has arranged that a typical area near a road be selected. This land will be available for the Department for five or seven years, to permit of comprehensive experiments being conducted to definite conclusions. The scrub will be felled and burned, and the land ploughed. The experimental area will be enclosed with a vermin-proof fence, while shelter-trees will be planted on the exposed aspect. The Department will provide seeds, fertilizers, and the plan of operations under the supervision of its officer. The farmers will provide the required labour. It is expected to proceed with the operations this autumn.

The most effective move towards reduced cost of living is the production of greater crops. This is attributable to the work of the Department of Agriculture, the agricultural colleges, and the experiment stations, and the help of the Press in publishing every movement to help the farmers. Demonstration work in Southern States in the fields has been of immediate benefit. The South has increased the food-supply very much in the last few years. The movement ordered by Congress to take farm demonstration into all Northern States will bring more food into our markets. Our fields can and will steadily increase their output in coming years as ways and means of growing heavier crops become better understood.—*Scientific American.*