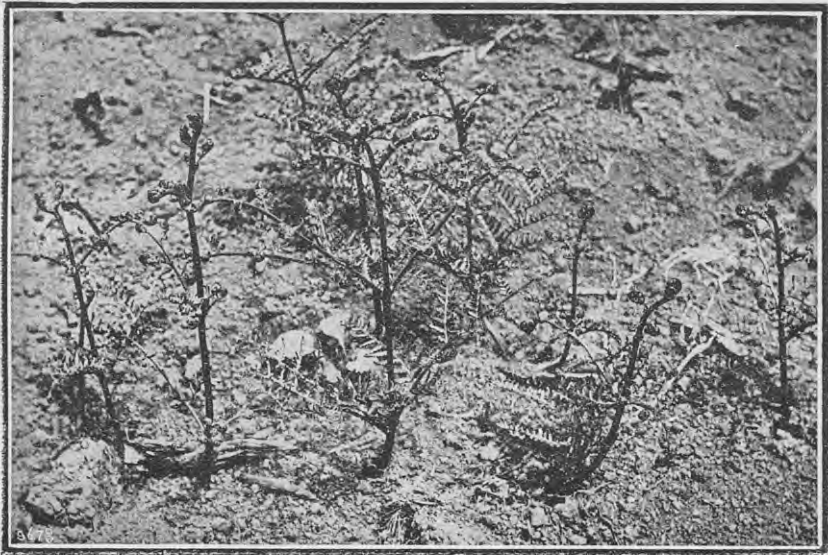


of the fronds to reach the light are successful. This explains the complete absence of bracken in dense forest. Wherever forest becomes open, and on the outskirts, fern rapidly puts in an appearance to the point where the vertical depth of the forest shade is too great for the fronds to penetrate.

Another feature of fern—and this an important one from the eradication aspect—is the fact that the development of fronds more or less ceases from the late autumn to the late spring or early summer. In certain districts the fronds virtually die in the winter, but this is by no means universal, and in many localities,



YOUNG FERN IN PLOUGHED LAND, JUST COMING OUT OF CURL STAGE.

A little too advanced for sheep, but right for mauling by cattle.

especially in the North, the plant is truly evergreen. This cessation of growth is of importance, taken in conjunction with its other peculiarities that have been mentioned, but is not of itself sufficient to make the plant comparatively easy to eradicate under certain conditions. Californian thistle also undergoes a somewhat similar dormant period, but that does not make it any the easier to destroy.

Bracken does not seem at all particular as to what type of ground it occupies, and it is found abundantly on all classes of New Zealand soils. It is frequently asserted that fern is an indication of acid soils; and that it exerts a toxic effect on other types of vegetation, but more particularly on grass, is a common belief.