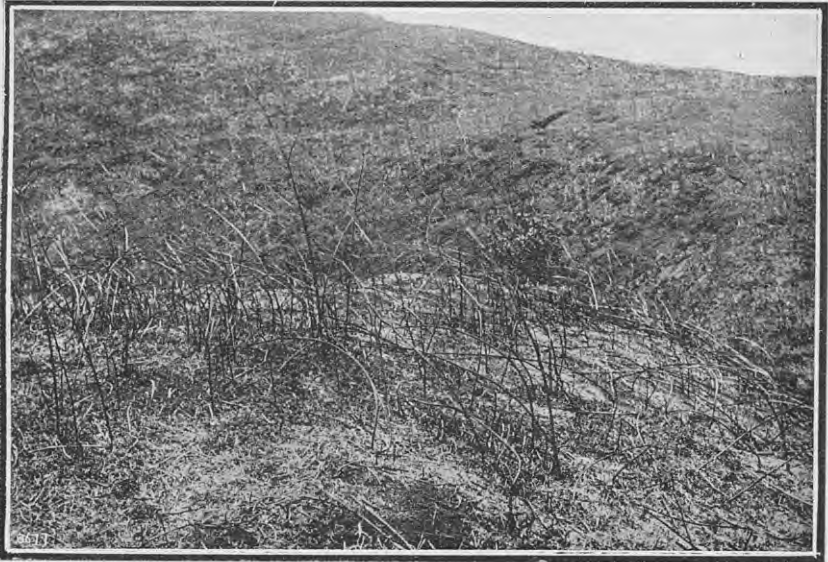


the pre-European days of this country. It is a notable fact that many types of New Zealand forest-land when burnt and then left unstocked do not as a normal rule reproduce forest, but turn rapidly into fern. This feature is of such an outstanding nature that it would appear safe to generalize and say that all fern-lands in New Zealand, both primitive and induced, with a few notable exceptions, occupy the site of former forest, and that a plant covering of fern is one of the stages through which, under natural conditions, the land must pass before forest is again developed.



OLD FERN BURNT PREPARATORY TO EITHER PLOUGHING OR SURFACE-SOWING.

When this view is taken it is seen that there is not much difference in origin between natural and artificially induced fern-land—the destruction of forest, either naturally or artificially, being the all-essential requisite for the production of both types. If the history of the vegetation were carried back far enough to the plant-colonization of actually virgin ground, it seems feasible to expect that fern in all cases preceded the development of forest. A study of the fern-lands of the Central Volcanic Plateau seems to fit in well with this hypothesis.

There is, however, a very signal difference between natural and artificially induced fern-lands. The vegetation of the former is