

MEANS FOR INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN NEW ZEALAND.

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APART from the highly important questions of increased population, closer settlement, and supply of capital, with which it is not my function to deal, there are numerous purely agricultural considerations which, if given widespread, practical, and concentrated attention by our farmers, would increase the production of New Zealand to a vast extent. It is such details of agricultural economy that count most in raising the output of a country whose prosperity is mainly dependent upon what is produced from its soil. The following embrace the more important of these factors:—

DRAINAGE.

As one traverses almost any district in New Zealand he is convinced of the great need there exists for systematic drainage of not only agricultural but also pastoral lands. An extensive carrying-out of adequate drainage will of itself vastly increase production from the pastures and cultivated areas of the country. How many of our pastures are growing plenteously rushes, sedge grasses, and other inferior and worthless vegetation; whereas these could be replaced by superior profit-producing grasses and clovers. True it is that the capital involved in carrying out adequate drainage in many instances is a barrier, but this is not always the trouble. It has been demonstrated over and over again that within a reasonable time drainage pays for itself in the increased carrying-capacity of, or enlarged crop returns from, the land. Apart from the question of lack of capital, it may be asserted that vast areas of country could be better drained, and so have their productiveness greatly increased, were landowners to give more thought and attention to this important subject. They would find that there has already been designed and successfully used labour-saving machinery that could materially assist them. The drain or mole plough, for instance, has done extensive valuable drainage-work for Southland, and to a lesser degree for other districts. Its use, particularly on pasture lands of stiffish subsoil, is of very great economic importance. In North America the traction ditcher has been used extensively, its function being to dig daily long stretches of ditching and place pipes along the ditch-bank ready for subsequent placing in proper position. This labour-saving machine is of much importance for certain types of country, especially where extensive under-drainage is badly needed owing to the stiff nature of the subsoil, where the land is otherwise of high value, and where no stumps or buried timber exist. Again, where labour is fairly abundant, how much more drainage of land could in many instances be effected by using ordinary farm implements, such as the single-furrow plough and the subsoil plough,