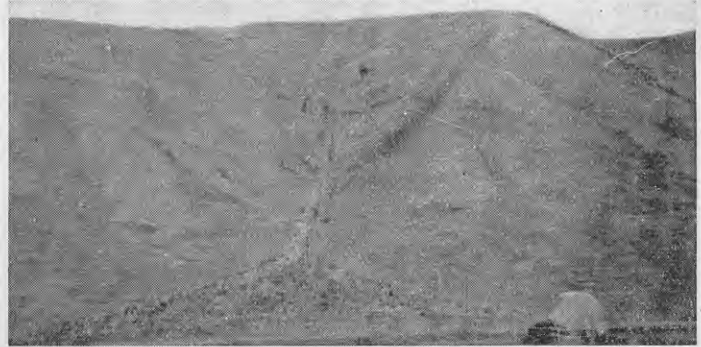


Erosion on the "Whither" Hills

APPROPRIATELY named, the Wither Hills is a large block of hilly country immediately south of Blenheim. About 50 years ago this land, it is said, was heavily clothed in tussock, and in this condition carried a good number of stock with success. Evidence of land deterioration was not apparent.

During the last 50 years, however, a vast change has taken place. The attentions of rabbits, stock, and the fire-stick combined have wrought an amazing transformation, so that today the land is clothed mainly in danthonia. Even this in parts is very sparse, and appears chary of continued existence.

In spite of the fact that the district enjoys only a light rainfall—on an average 20 inches to 23 inches—eroding hillsides are to be seen almost all over the block, and an idea of the extent and rapidity of this erosion can be gained from the fact that within the last three years definite changes have



The extent to which erosion is taking charge on the Wither Hills.

taken place in the scour under investigation.

Measures to counteract this tendency have already been in operation for several years. Firstly, the rabbits, once plentiful, have been reduced al-

most to zero, while burning also has lost most of its advocates. Thus, the two factors which played a large part in bringing about the present condition of the hills have been eliminated. In areas where this applies, the land is responding in that tussock growth can be seen coming back, which is probably the forerunner of better cover and greater resistance to erosion. Much of the area is, however, so denuded that it will be several years before substantial results can be expected from the measures mentioned.

—D. R. WILKIE, Instructor in Agriculture, Blenheim.

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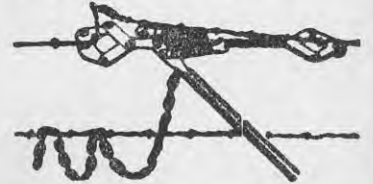
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