



## MORE WHEAT NEEDED

By G. K. McPHERSON, *Instructor in Agriculture, Ashburton.*

**W**HHEAT must rank as one of New Zealand's most important crops—if not the most important. From it bread, the principal staple food of the country, and other forms of food containing wheaten flour are made. The poultry industry is also largely dependent on wheat, and two by-products of wheat, bran and pollard, are important stock foods. The history of wheat growing in New Zealand and the economic importance of the crop in the Dominion's agriculture are discussed in this article; the place of wheat in the rotation, the growing and harvesting of the crop, the main varieties grown, and the fungous diseases and insect pests parasitical to wheat are also described.

**T**HE value of wheat was so obvious that it was naturally the first crop to demand the attention of early settlers

in this country, and wherever it was possible to produce the crop it was grown. Under favourable soil and climatic conditions excellent yields were usually obtained, and with the demand for wheat from abroad the crop could be relied upon to provide steady returns.

The advent of refrigeration in the late 'eighties, however, gave a tremendous impetus to pastoral farming. The higher-rainfall areas were gradually grassed down in permanent pastures, and with dairying and fat lamb production proving successful, wheat growing gradually became concentrated in drier areas where it was found advisable to plough and regrass periodically. Wheat growing thus became restricted mainly to Canterbury and North Otago, where there was an annual rainfall of 25 to 35in. and large expanses of flat country suited to cultivation.

Today the system of farming operating throughout these areas consists largely of the blending of fat lamb production and the growing of wheat. Other crops such as barley, oats, and peas are produced, but wheat is the main crop grown on many farms; in fact it is an essential crop in the farm economy on many arable farms.