



A Mackenzie homestead.

commando training is safe and restful. Summer and spring are liable to be plagued by the nor'wester, which in these seasons can blow for weeks day and night. The warning signal is purple clouds over towards Mount Cook. In an hour or two the outlines of the main divide are lost, and sky, tussocks, and lake surfaces have turned sullen grey. The wind rattles doors and windows interminably, lifts carpets, forces dust through every crack, and outside roars in the trees with a noise like Niagara. If your temper stays equable after a few days of this you are superhuman.

The people of the Mackenzie are very much the product of their ancestry and their environment. As their names show, most of them are descendants of the Highland Scots who pioneered the country. They are imaginative, half believe in ghosts, keep their past with them, and have a passion for memorials. Monuments, cairns, plaques, and liberally-inscribed memorial churches abound in the Mackenzie. There is, for instance, the memorial at the top of Burke's Pass, which reads thus:—

TO PUT ON RECORD THAT
MICHAEL JOSEPH BURKE
A GRADUATE OF DUBLIN UNIVERSITY
AND THE FIRST OCCUPIER OF
RAINCLIFF STN

ENTERED THIS PASS, KNOWN TO THE
MAORIS AS TE KOPI OPIHI
IN 1855.

O YE WHO ENTER THE PORTALS OF THE
MACKENZIE TO FOUND HOMES, TAKE
THE WORD OF A CHILD OF THE MISTY
GORGES, AND PLANT FOREST TREES
FOR YOUR LIVES! SO SHALL YOUR
MOUNTAIN FACINGS AND RIVER FLATS
BE PRESERVED TO YOUR CHILDREN'S
CHILDREN AND FOR EVERMORE.

1917
THIS PASS IS 2,200 FEET
ABOVE SEA LEVEL.

This mixture of the high falutin, the common-sense, and the informative is characteristic. From their environment the people of the Mackenzie get a certain remoteness from the affairs of the world. In all that has to do with sheep they are, of course, severely practical; if you don't know sheep and sheep country you don't survive in the Mackenzie. But in matters of politics and economics they think and talk with a simplicity and directness denied to lowlanders. They see things from an elevation, and they do not know what it means to be parochial. When an inhabitant of the Mackenzie goes beyond Burke's Pass, he talks of going "down country." The phrase implies a moral as well as a physical descent.