

crops thrive excellently. Such is the superiority of the climate for the growth of cereals, that places situated at an altitude at which grain would not grow in Britain were found to yield productively. Wheat was shown to us at Naseby of good quality, which had been grown at a height above the sea of 2,000 feet. Mr. Roberts states, in his evidence in relation to the high land in the Hindon and Silverpeak Districts, "Good crops are grown 1,500 feet above the sea: oats and magnificent turnips." The height of Strath Taieri Plain at its lowest point is about 625 feet above the sea.

6. Cultivation, beyond what is necessary to supply local wants, is subjected at present to the prohibitive drawbacks of distance from market and cost of carriage. We found in several instances two years' crops on hand. These drawbacks were the only complaints made by the settlers. They praised the climate and the fertility of the soil, and were all desirous to increase their area of cultivation, if facility of communication could be obtained.

7. In the face of the existing difficulties a flour-mill has been built at Ophir, in which the amount of wheat ground is increasing every year. The proprietor, Mr Jones, expects to be able to keep two pairs of stones constantly going. The quality of wheat and flour on hand was remarkably good: Mr Jones stated as his opinion that betwixt his mill and St. Bathans there is a length of twenty miles of as fine land as any farmer could wish to put a plough into, and that he had no doubt it would pay to grow wheat in the district to be ground into flour and sent to Dunedin for export, provided there was a railway to carry it. A large flour-mill is now in course of erection at Luggate Creek, Upper Clutha, and a third has been built in the Maniototo Plain.

8. In addition to its agricultural capabilities, the district can produce fruit and vegetables of all kinds of surpassing quality, the consumption of which is at present limited to the immediate vicinity. The cost and delay incident to land carriage by heavy wagons are prohibitive of fruit being sent to Dunedin. The total cost to the colony for imported fruit is above £100,000 annually, the greater portion of which might be supplied locally. Near Clyde we saw vines growing in the open air loaded with grapes, which were ripe and well flavoured, some of the bunches weighing 3 lb. each. Peaches, plums, apples, pears, nectarines, strawberries, and other fruits were all growing in profusion, of large size and of excellent quality. At Clyde we were much gratified by an exhibition of fruit, vegetables, and grain, the produce of the neighbourhood, which were all of remarkable excellence and quality. This fruit-bearing zone extends as far as Pembroke, on Lake Wanaka. The growth of fruit might be indefinitely extended, leading to local manufactures. Mr. J. D. Feraud, Monte Cristo, near Clyde, carries on a considerable trade in spite of the expense of carriage, and sends fruit, wines, bitters, and liqueurs to Dunedin to a considerable extent. He has obtained a large number of awards for his productions at the Sydney and Melbourne Exhibitions.

9. It is an important fact to be taken into account in considering the extent of the agricultural resources that, with the exception of the small area specified as already alienated, the whole of the land in the district is still in the hands of the Crown.

10. From Hindon onwards to its terminus at Lake Wanaka the line proceeds through a chain of agricultural plains, ancient lake basins, the soil of which appeared to be well adapted for the growth of cereals and root crops. Its character is fine alluvial silt, easily worked, and showing capability of raising crops of good quality and of a high average. Along the margin of these basins travertine is found in abundance, and the soil is thus enriched with plenty of lime. The straw of the crops seen was of a rich golden colour. These plains are surrounded by hills, from which numberless perennial streamlets flow, affording an easy and unfailing means of irrigation, should it be found necessary in very dry seasons.

11. The Strath Taieri Plain commences thirty-four miles from Dunedin. It is twenty miles in length, and contains 37,000 acres arable, of which 18,172 have been already sold. The total area of the plain and adjoining table land, capable of being classed as agricultural land, is 97,250 acres, of which 56,550 have been sold. Gladbrook, at the lower end of the valley, is noted for the excellence of its fat stock. We saw there a grass paddock of 95 acres, which carries 85 head of cattle all the year round. Last year 300 head of cattle and 4,000 sheep fattened off turnips on this estate were sold, the greater number of which would have been sent by railway if the line had been in operation. Settlers in the upper end of the plain, near Hyde, obtained 40 bushels of wheat to the acre; one had an average of from 45 to 50 and 70 bushels of oats. All concurred that with better communication production would be largely increased and profits considerably augmented. If more land were opened in Strath Taieri it would at once be taken up. It is estimated that, in addition to fat stock and wool, Strath Taieri is capable of exporting 6,000 tons of grain annually.

12. The Maniototo Plain contains 150,000 acres of arable land, of which only 31,236 have been sold by the Crown. We examined settlers from the Eweburn and Sowburn Blocks and from the Kyeburn Hundred. A settler on the Kyeburn Hundred who had broken up 300 acres described the land as specially adapted for root crops. His crop of turnips, he said, astonished him by the size of the bulbs, and he had a fine crop of carrots from seed sown broadcast upon the first ploughing. He had 50 acres sown out in grass, which, he stated, five sheep to the acre could not eat down all the year round. He had had 100 bushels of oats to the acre. Another had 400 sheep on 100 acres of English grass. In the Eweburn and Sowburn Blocks witnesses stated that their averages were—wheat, 40 bushels to the acre; oats, from 40 to 65 bushels; barley, 25 bushels. Peas had been tried in several instances with the result of excellent crops, the produce being used for feeding pigs. All the settlers concurred in the opinion that there was