

urgent necessity for improved communication, which would lead to the land being profitably occupied and production largely increased. The probable export of grain when the district is fully cultivated may be estimated at 30,000 tons annually.

13. The Ida Valley contains upwards of 60,000 acres adapted for agricultural settlement. It is about twenty miles in length, by between five and eight miles in width. Several blocks of land have been recently opened for settlement. In the lower part of the valley, at Poolburn and Tiger Hill, 5,000 acres have been taken up, and in the upper end 2,377 acres. We found that good averages of cereals prevailed equally here. One settler (Mr. McIntosh) said, "We cannot get any sale for our produce. We have all last year's oats here yet, and we can't sell them. That is how we are placed, and why we want a railway." Another said he would be prepared to increase the extent of his farm and cultivation if there were the means of sending away his produce. He had had 1,100 bushels of wheat of good quality from 45 acres last year. Some of the settlers here possess considerable means from their mining industry, and are very desirous to extend their agricultural holdings. The ridges of hills which surround the valley are well adapted for being divided into suitable areas as pasture land in connection with the arable land. The probable export of grain may be estimated at 12,000 tons annually.

14. The Manuharikia Valley is an extensive plain, containing a large amount of valuable land. It is estimated that the agricultural area is not less than 160,000 acres; of this, 30,000 acres have been surveyed, and nearly one-half of the surveyed land has been sold. A great deal of land of superior quality is yet to be surveyed. One farm of 1,250 acres, of which there are 280 under cultivation, was an excellent sample of the rolling downs at the upper end of the plain. Wheat gave 30 bushels to the acre, and oats 30. But in this instance it was the excellence of the root crops which specially attracted our attention. The crops of turnips, beet, and carrots, sown on the first furrow, were most remarkable. At the lower part of the plain there are thirty settlers in the Spottis Hundred. One farm, containing 500 acres, is nearly all broken up, and there are about 170 acres of English grass. Butter and cheese-making have been undertaken here, but, beyond supplying the local demand, there is no encouragement at present to extend the manufacture. The grain export may be estimated at 30,000 tons annually.

15. On the Earnsclough Station, near Clyde, there is a moderate extent of agricultural land, on which good crops of wheat and oats were grown this season. The Bald Hill Flat has been nearly all taken up and cultivated. The valley of the Clutha narrows to a gorge between Clyde and Cromwell; but there are numerous fertile patches where orchard-growing could be carried on profitably. At Cromwell the valley opens out into a wide plain stretching thirty miles, as far north as the Lakes. The area of agricultural land is not less than 150,000 acres, of which 20,000 acres have been alienated. The Hawera, Tarras, and Wanaka Blocks are all of good quality. In the Mount Barker Block the average yield of wheat was 35 bushels per acre, and in some places the yield of oats was 70 bushels. On the Hawera side of the Clutha several settlers were examined. They concurred in the estimate that there were above 100,000 acres between the Hawera and the Lindis, on their side of the river, all suitable for cultivation. The average yield of wheat was said to be 40 bushels to the acre, and oats 35 bushels. In the words of one of the witnesses, sown grass "grows splendid." We were struck by the intelligence of the witnesses, and the total absence of complaint on their part, except that they were shut out from a market by distance, and thus prevented from doing justice to the productive capabilities of their farms. The export of grain from this district may be estimated at 30,000 tons annually.

16. Within the influence of the terminus at the Lakes there are several important valleys on which a large population might be settled. The Matukituki Valley, opening to Lake Wanaka, contains an area of 14,000 acres arable, of a quality little inferior to that of the celebrated Taieri Plain. Motatapu Valley, 1,000 acres; the Makaroa Valley, 10,000 acres; and the Forks, 4,000 acres.

17. In estimating the tonnage of grain for export which the district is capable of producing only one-third of the arable land has been taken into account, and allowance has been made for local consumption. We believe that as settlement proceeds a large area of what is at present considered pastoral land will be found well adapted for settlement and cultivation. The total annual tonnage, estimated at 100,000 tons, is under the limit of the capabilities of the country.

18. For further details reference is made to the evidence and explanatory map accompanying this report.

19. We have unanimously come to the conclusion that the pastoral and agricultural resources of the district to be traversed by the proposed railway are of very great extent, but production is at present limited by the want of means of sending produce to market. It is not too much to say that, were the railway carried through, it would secure an immediate and large traffic in stock and produce, and the result would be the rapid settlement of a fine tract of country, and a large increase of revenue and population. The yearly value of the produce if facility of communication were afforded cannot be estimated at less than a million sterling. We are also of opinion that delay in prosecuting the railway works will, for want of a market, be attended with loss and damage to the enterprising men who have settled as the agricultural pioneers of the country, and whose present position justly deserves early and earnest consideration.

20. In addition to the agricultural and pastoral resources of the country, the timber trade from the extensive forests in the vicinity of Lake Wanaka, which reach back as far as the West Coast, may be referred to. At present no more is cut than is necessary to satisfy local wants,