

## NEW ZEALAND WASTING AWAY.

Although many of New Zealand's newspapers give frequent reminders of the ever-increasing erosion in this country, the extent of this loss is not properly recognised by the general public, nor by Parliament, nor by local bodies. Some of the damage seems to be beyond repair, but it is possible in many cases to take effective measures against the forces of erosion. It is simply a matter of forming a friendship with nature instead of waging war against her.

The kind of penalty which New Zealand will have to pay for neglect in this field is indicated by the experience of the United States of America. Here is a passage from a report of Mr. H. H. Bennett, Director of the Soil Erosion Service, for which a sum of £2,000,000 has been allotted as a "first instalment":—

"While we have spent hundreds of millions of dollars for fertiliser, soil-improving crops, plant breeding and agricultural machinery, we have done little to conserve the soil itself.

"Fully 35,000,000 acres of formerly cultivated land, worth £350,000,000, has been ruined by unrestrained erosion, and the products of wastage have clogged stream channels and filled costly reservoirs.

"In addition, 125,000,000 acres have been stripped of the more productive top soil, with a consequent reduction of value of more than £600,000,000.

"On these soil-stripped, impoverished areas tens of thousands of farmers are battling for existence," he went on. "Land stripped of the fecund surface covering is not soil; the exposed subsoil is simply the material of which soil is made through long periods of natural processes.

"Over twelve of our principal soil types, occurring chiefly in the Mississippi Valley, actual measurements have shown that under prevailing methods of usage sixty-five times as much soil and five times as much rain water are being lost every year as compared with the losses under natural conditions of vegetation and ground structure."

Man's folly or lack of vision in New Zealand has made many depressing spectacles in the loss of top soil from a mere slip on a hill-side to the huge slides on the flanks of mountains, such as may be seen at Arthur's Pass (in the Southern Alps), and in numerous other localities. This first vanishing of the surface is, of course, not the only misfortune, for masses of debris, previously held in place by nature's cover, hurtle into the beds of rivers, choke them and cause ruinous floods. Another disadvantage is that the rivers from time to time are forced to tear out fresh courses.