

"The farm" is a feature of the Grasmere-Cora Lynn run. On most high-country tussock runs, the plough isn't used extensively for preparing winter-feed areas. Either the land is too rough, or short-term leases discourage such attempts at improvement. "The farm," however, produces turnips, grasses, and white clover for winter feed. A strict rotation is applied to the ten paddocks making up the 300 cultivated acres. One paddock of 24 acres produces two 35-ton hay crops annually. This, together with liming and top-dressing with superphosphate, has raised the carrying-capacity of "the farm" from 150 to over 1,000. Cull ewes and wethers are fattened in the late summer, and through the winter over 1,000 hoggets graze with a much lower death-rate than those on the ranges. Their fleeces, too, are 2 lb. heavier.

But, in spite of "the farm," Grasmere-Cora Lynn carries fewer sheep than in the past. Over a period of sixty-five years the sheep population has dwindled from 16,200 in 1879 to 11,900 in 1919, and to approximately 10,000 in 1944. This can be explained partly from a change-over from Merino to a half-bred flock, and a policy, since 1930, of controlled grazing. Tussock burning (and with it the destruction of small, tender feed) is almost completely banned. Yet overstocking, indiscriminate tussock burning, and

erosion continue steadily on most other high-country runs. They continue to deteriorate, seriously.

What of the future of our high country, which at present produces wool, and relatively little food? New Zealand is now committed to a maximum production of food. In the years just ahead synthetic substitutes yet may compete successfully with fine wools.

The high-country farmer depends on wool. The wool depends on the sheep, the sheep depend on the grass, the grass depends on the soil. The tussock grasslands and the thin mountain soils are deteriorating rapidly, and partial re-afforestation, giving shelter for stock and grasses, is needed. New grasses could be tried which have been developed and stood the test of stock on similar country in other parts of the world. Not only would they provide food, but protect the soil.

Perhaps another solution is bringing to the ranges more beef cattle to live on rank tussock and scrub growth hitherto burned. This would require an extensive fencing-off of precipitous areas and a reduction in the number of sheep. Should the raising of wool, sheep and beef cattle prove uneconomic, the only significant alternative would be afforestation to combat floods and erosion, and to guarantee the supply of hydro-electric power, the last remaining use for our high country.—A report based on an article by KENNETH B. CUMBERLAND.

