

WESTLAND.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

THE sales of land continue very dull in Westland, but there has been, and still is, a little more desire to take up land on deferred payments. There is reason to believe that in this manner the progress of settlement will be steady, if not very rapid. It is very desirable that the opening of the horse-track to Okarito should be accompanied by the encouragement of settlement in the southern parts of the district, and steps are now being taken to throw open for selection on deferred payments a block of very good land on the Wanganui River. It has lately been my duty to recommend that a sum should be placed on the estimates for the purpose of opening a somewhat similar block at the Wateroa.

I am also sanguine that settlement at Jackson's Bay may yet be made a reality by a little fostering, and at a moderate outlay upon the settlement block itself, and upon the Paringa and Haast Roads, which will open a communication between it and the rest of the district.

Upon the whole, notwithstanding the depression which has been so prevalent on the whole of this coast, I think that the satisfactory condition of alluvial mining in Westland, caused partly by the Government water-races, and the unprecedented length of good road which is now open, will combine to produce a perceptible improvement in the progress of settlement in Westland.

Rabbit Pest.

I have heard no complaints on this subject.

Forest Timber.

At the end of 1876, when the establishment of a state forest department was contemplated, a calculation was made of the area of forest land in Westland. The area was then fixed at 2,623,550 acres. The return will now stand thus—

	Acres.
Area in 1876	2,623,550
Hill-tops and scrub	691,200
Sold or otherwise alienated	32,350
	723,550
Total	
	1,900,000

I do not know that timber-cutting by unlicensed persons is carried on to a great extent in Westland. No doubt a great deal of timber is cut by miners, but when the trees are on their own claims they have a right to them, and when they are not, as doubtless often happens, it would not do to treat as a trespasser the miner who pays fees directly for all his mining privileges, and whose operations ought certainly to be facilitated as much as possible. "Fire" can do little mischief to the West Coast forests, which are never dry enough to burn.

Miscellaneous.

Number of Crown grants issued during the year ending 30th June, 1879—286. Total land revenue during the same period, £3,322 9s. 9d.

Pastoral licenses, and licenses to occupy purchased lands, are already included in the respective returns relating to them. There are none other to be noticed here.

There has been no particular delay in the issue of Crown grants, which have been got out with a very fair rapidity.

J. GILES,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

OTAGO.

REPORT of the COMMISSIONER of CROWN LANDS for the YEAR ended 30th JUNE, 1879.

THERE is a considerable falling-off in the sales of rural land within the district during the past year, there having been sold, in the year ending 30th June, 1878, in round numbers, 92,865 acres, while this year the acreage is only 52,744. This decline in the sales has arisen partly from so limited a quantity of land being opened for selection, partly from so much land having been opened up under deferred payments and agricultural leases, partly from the large acreage of private land cut up into farms, and also, in a great measure, from the general depression, from which Otago has not entirely escaped.

Deferred Payments.

The land under this system is still eagerly competed for, though not to the same extent as last year; but, wherever really good agricultural land is thrown open, the demand is still keeping up, and attracts the attention of those who have capital enough to make a fair start.

Agricultural-Lease Land.

This plan of occupation has proved of great advantage to the miners and others resident on the gold fields. As there is no compulsory-residence condition, the miners are enabled to work at their claims and farms alternately, and thus fulfil the conditions of lease whilst, at the same time, earning a livelihood at their usual avocations.