

During the year a new set of regulations for the working of the forests, saw-mill areas, &c., has been prepared by the Under-Secretary of the department, Mr. H. J. H. Elliott, which, so far, has been found to work satisfactorily, and has enabled the department to deal with the sale of timber and other matters which had not hitherto been provided for.

DEPARTMENTAL AND GENERAL.

As immediately connected with the settlement and improvement of the lands of the colony, inquiries have been set on foot to ascertain the cause of the general want of success in the exportation of butter to the United Kingdom. Leaving here, as the article does, in first-rate condition, it is frequently found to have deteriorated on the voyage, and on unpacking is deficient in keeping-qualities; and it is with a view to determine the cause of this and other questions that the department is causing the inquiries to be made. The price in the English market has fallen very much since last year. Inquiries are also being made as to whether a practical butter-maker, acquainted with the Danish method of preparation of the article, can be obtained for the colony.

The large increase from year to year in the number of selectors who hold their lands on improvement conditions involves a large increase in both the field- and office-work. The periodical payments under deferred-payment, perpetual-lease, small grazing-runs, pastoral runs, and other systems necessitates the keeping of an elaborate system of accounts, and a very large amount of correspondence, whilst the inspection of properties on the ground is also augmenting rapidly. In the ten Land Offices of the colony there are now 8,914 separate accounts against so many properties, all involving several entries and computations, besides correspondence during the year. To show how this class of work has increased, the following figures have been compiled: On the 30th June, 1880, there were 2,877 accounts; on the 31st March, 1885, 4,256; and on the 31st March last, 8,914, as above, with every prospect of their increasing. This last year has also witnessed a considerable increase to the work of the local officers in the revaluations which have taken place—a work which will probably continue through the present year. In addition to the foregoing the Commissioners have also made inquiries into the claims of a large number of claimants under the Naval and Military Settlers' Land Act of last session, the total results of which will not appear till next year. The work has been an onerous one, and has borne very heavily on the Commissioners, who were, without this addition, fully occupied in their own special duties.

During the year another edition of the "Land Guide" (Vol. X.) has been issued to the public, giving full particulars of the land-tenures, and descriptions of every section open for selection at the date of publication (January, 1890). Copies have been distributed to all parts of the world, and to every institution where the information is likely to be of service. At the same time local Land Guides for each land district have been published at intervals of about three months, giving all possible information as to the lands available or about to be prepared for selection.

The second volume of Mr. Thomas Mackay's "Manual of the Forage-plants and Grasses Useful to New Zealand" is nearly ready, and will be available for the public very shortly.