

dairying, and it is expected that the completion of the railway connection with Canterbury will mark the beginning of a new era of prosperity.

The whole of Westland being within a mining district, the tenures available for settlement of new lands are restricted to renewable lease or license under the special regulations for the occupation of pastoral lands.

Included in the proposals for offering for selection during the coming year are blocks of land of very fair quality at Kaimata and Bell Hill. In the case of the former renewable-lease tenure will be offered, but as circumstances preclude this tenure from being adopted in the case of the latter, licenses under the special regulations only will be available.

Arrangements have recently been completed to release from timber-cutting license portions of two education-endowment reserves at Wataroa, comprising land of first-class quality, so that this will shortly be available for settlement. The portion adjacent to the Wataroa Dairy Factory and suitable for permanent settlement will be offered for selection on renewable lease by ballot, and the remainder, which would be unsafe for residence purposes on account of its liability to flood, will be offered for lease by public auction under the Public Bodies' Leases Act. The whole of this land will find a ready market.

It is unpleasant to call attention to the absolute nonchalance with which too many settlers view the alarming growth and spread of blackberry and gorse. No whole-hearted or serious attempts are made to grapple with the evil, and lands which could carry good grass and profitably run more stock are rapidly becoming more and more overrun by these pests.

The improvement in the market for New Zealand hemp has given to the flax industry, which has been languishing during recent years, a much-needed flip.

Mining operations continue to be carried on with varying success. Several propositions of some magnitude are now being developed in close proximity to Hokitika, and the prospects give promise of a successful year.

A most important stage has now been reached as far as the sawmilling industry is concerned, New Zealand timbers having recently been fairly established on the Australian market, where there is sufficient demand to absorb the whole of the surplus output of Westland, but this demand will continue only so long as the market is kept regularly supplied. At the present time considerable difficulty is experienced in securing the necessary shipping accommodation, and the failure to establish some constant and reliable service will undoubtedly lead to the curtailment of a very promising trade.

CANTERBURY.

(C. R. POLLEN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The two principal factors on which the prosperity of the farmer depends—*i.e.*, weather and market prices—have been abnormal all the year. The whole of the Canterbury Plains, except a strip near to the hills, and to which north-west weather extends, suffered an unusually dry year. On referring to the amount of rainfall recorded it will be found that from March of last year to February of this the northern half of the plain approximately averaged 17 in. only, and the southern 13 in. of rain; whereas near the hills and over the pastoral highlands the fall was normal: along the front of the hills for two or three miles of plain 24 in. to 26 in. fell as far south as Orari Gorge, but south of that point the fall was only 16 in. The result of this was first felt in the lambing season: the average dropped from west to east the same. As to stock-fattening facilities, large quantities of store cattle and sheep were sold to Southland and North Island buyers. An unusually large area of the plain was sown in wheat and oats, which came away fairly well at first, as moderate rains fell in October and November, but a late frost in November proved disastrous to thousands of acres, and then in December there was insufficient rain to develop the crops which the frost had not affected. The straw was short and thin, and the harvest proved very unsatisfactory. Land which in normal seasons has produced 30 to 40 bushels of wheat per acre returned merely 10 to 15 bushels, and a large area was never reaped at all—the stock turned in upon it or made into hay. Most of the Canterbury beef offered came from the hills, where there has been plenty of stock-feed all through the year—feed has actually been wasting in places. Rabbits increased in consequence of the mild winter and the plethora of food. The turnip and rape crops were subject to the same order of success. The western slopes had splendid strikes, and excellent crops may now be seen, but towards the coast their appearance rapidly altered for the worse, and the crops were faded and pest-ridden.

The high market prices obtained for produce partially compensated for the losses caused by weather-conditions experienced by the settlers on the plains.

The pastoral country in the Mackenzie County has suffered very little during the recent trying season. The stock are looking well and winter feed is assured. Some of the young plantations reported on so favourably last year have suffered considerably, while others have made good progress, and will soon become a marked feature in the landscape.

Transfers.—The total number of transfers submitted to the Land Board was 259, of which fourteen were declined.

Education Reserves.—Thirty-five leases over education reserves expired on the 31st March, 1916, twenty-nine of which, comprising 6,949 acres, are being renewed to the present tenants at enhanced rentals. Five, comprising 652 acres, are to be sold at auction on lease for fourteen years, and one, of an area of 693 acres, is being subdivided.