

The remaining settlement, The Lake, was for a time somewhat overrun with rabbits, but this difficulty is now being overcome and settlement is proceeding. The tenants on this settlement graze sheep and cattle, and are doing well, and in a few years will, no doubt, be as successful as the Braeburn and Wangapeka Settlements.

MARLBOROUGH.

(H. J. LOWE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There are fifteen settlements in this district, comprising 219,441 acres, occupied by 474 lessees. During the year one new settlement, comprising 144 acres, was acquired under section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917. With the exception of a few of the Lynton Downs tenants, the settlers appear to be making satisfactory progress, and transfers of holdings are not effected without the passing of a substantial goodwill. Comparatively a small area was cropped this year, but the crops, mostly oats, barley, and peas, were good, and fair returns resulted. The prices realized for stock, wool, and dairy-produce were good, but prices are receding on account of a drought setting in in Marlborough and Canterbury, entailing a scarcity of feed for the winter, and shortage of shipping to clear the freezing-works. Land-for-settlement settlers are, with the farmers in general, suffering from shortage of labour and high cost of materials, &c., due to conditions arising from the war.

Revaluations of Lands.—Thirteen settlers on Hillersden Settlement applied under the provisions of section 15 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1915, for revaluation of their holdings. Six of these were reduced.

WESTLAND.

(R. S. GALBRAITH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There are only two settlements in Westland—viz., Kokatahi and Poerua. Both have been in existence for a number of years, and the settlers, who are chiefly engaged in dairy-farming, are doing exceedingly well.

CANTERBURY.

(H. D. M. HASZARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The total number of estates settled in this district is now 115, with an area of 552,011 acres, and, taken as a whole, their position may be considered as quite satisfactory.

OTAGO.

(ROBERT T. SADD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

This class of settlement has practically ceased, as all estates now purchased are being subdivided for discharged soldiers, and presumably this position will be maintained until the requirements of soldier settlers are met.

Generally, the old-established settlements, chiefly in North Otago, are doing well owing to the climatic conditions being favourable. The heavy rains which have caused such disaster in the south suited the dry areas of the north.

Elderslie No. 2 Settlement, which was revalued about two years ago, is now in a prosperous condition, but this is owing not to the substantial reductions in rentals, but to the more favourable seasons. Had the summer droughts continued the settlers would have been ruined. When a settler is heavily in debt a reduction of 25 per cent. of his rent is not going to make his farm a paying proposition. The failure can generally be traced to unfavourable seasons or inexperienced and unpractical farming. Revaluations and reductions of rentals are very small factors, but a good season, with good farming, always put the farmer in a prosperous position.

Otanomomo Settlement was again heavily flooded, and this is the fourth flood in five years. These settlers have shown exceptional courage and endurance in returning to their farms after each flood and battling along to make another start. They should be helped as much as possible, and areas of higher land acquired as a refuge from the frequently recurring floods, and also a scheme devised to lessen their liability to floods in the future. Barnego Settlement was also very seriously flooded, and the settlers suffered heavy losses, but being an older settlement, with low rents, they are better able to stand these losses.

SOUTHLAND.

(THOMAS BROOK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The number of settlements in this district is now eighteen, exclusive of Teihoka and Allenby, which were recently purchased and are now being prepared for early selection.

Stalker Settlement and Monte Cristo Settlement were opened for selection during the year. The former was divided into nine holdings, and six of these being small dairy farms were readily taken up. The other four are suitable for soldiers desirous of taking up poultry-farming, bee-farming, or vegetable-culture, but no such applicant has yet come forward. Monte Cristo Settlement contains four sections suitable for dairy-farming, and all but one have been selected.

With the exception of Knowsley Park, Waiairiki, and Ardlussa, all the other settlements are prospering, and considerable goodwill is required to tempt lessees to transfer their leases. This applies particularly to Edendale, where sales have been effected at prices ranging from £40 to £50 per acre.