

PUBLICATIONS SECTION.

The activities of this Section (Mr. R. H. Hooper, Editor) have been continued steadily. It is satisfactory to note an appreciable reduction in the cost of printing, due mainly to a fall in the price of paper, and the prospects for an extended output of publications (when the general financial position has further improved) are thus more promising than for some years past.

The Department's monthly organ, the *New Zealand Journal of Agriculture*, has been maintained at a high standard, a special feature being the semi-popular scientific treatment of subjects relating to the various branches of agriculture in the Dominion. It is of great importance that easily available permanent records of this character should be made, and such an undertaking is clearly the function of the Department. The necessity of devoting a due share of space to simple instructional farming-matter has not been lost sight of, however. It may be mentioned that the *Journal* foreign list includes scientific and educational institutions in every part of the world, and evidence of the attention and appreciation the publication receives abroad is frequently received. Special thanks are due to the contributors of matter to the *Journal*. In many cases this valuable work is done out of regular hours, and the greater part of it is of a more or less volunteer order.

A number of bulletins have been issued during the year, some being new and others brought up to date. Various other departmental publications have also been handled by the Section.

HEMP-GRADING SERVICE.

The hemp industry has passed through a difficult year. Overseas market prices have been on a low basis, and as competitive fibres, which have shown an improvement in quality, have been selling also at low values, the New Zealand article has suffered. The position was realized by flax-millers, and endeavours were made to improve the output, especially on lines of better standardization of quality, an improvement which was urgently needed. Previous experience has shown that on a low market the grading of the product undergoes criticism, and this happened last year. It cannot be said that the grading has been in every way satisfactory, but the methods of packing adopted rendered this almost impossible. The whole question has been thoroughly gone into, and joint action taken by millers and the Department has brought about much better conditions. Millers were undoubtedly hampered in certain areas by the effect upon the general standard of quality of the raw material and of the manufactured article resulting from the prevalence of the so-called "yellow-leaf" disease of *Phormium tenax*, and this further created difficulties for the graders. It is most satisfactory to note that this disease shows signs of dying out, and this, combined with the fact that some of the most affected areas have been converted from phormium swamps into good pasture-land, must have a great effect in bringing about a markedly higher standard of quality in the output.

The necessity for producing fibre of higher quality—and it can be done—is well illustrated by a report given to the Department (and very highly appreciated) by a prominent flax-miller who visited America during the year. He stated that improvement in quality was necessary and more careful scutching required in order to attract American buying. London information indicates similar requirements there. The new order of things established here, which it is to be trusted will continue, should result in giving greater satisfaction and confidence to overseas buyers.

During the year 58,000 bales passed through the grading-stores, a decrease of 24,836 bales compared with the previous twelve months. Tow graded amounted to 12,831 bales, a decrease of 4,788 bales; and stripper-slips to 654 bales, a decrease of 1,378 bales. The gradings of hemp showed the following percentages for the various grades: Superior, 0.12; fine, 1.17; good-fair, 25.86; high-fair, 52.34; low-fair, 15.88; common, 2.78; rejected, 1.81; condemned, 0.02. Of the tow graded 42.9 per cent. scored first grade, 47.94 per cent. second grade, 6.97 per cent. third grade, and 2.17 per cent. was condemned. Of the stripper-slips 9.6 per cent. scored first grade, 90.1 per cent. second grade, and 0.3 per cent. was condemned.

While prices remain at a level at which small plants cannot be operated on a payable basis the Dominion's annual output should remain at approximately 60,000 bales. With any decided increase in price, however, many of the smaller mills which have suspended operations will resume, and the total quantity of fibre produced will be considerably increased. Until such time as the actual planting and cultivation of phormium has been shown to be an economic proposition, our output will not reach the high figures of the war period.

GRAIN-GRADING SERVICE.

During the year the Chief Grain-grader (Mr. A. W. Smith) has continued to occupy the position of Assistant Wheat Controller, but has also exercised a general supervision over the grain-grading service.

Wheat of the 1921-22 crop commenced to come on the market in February last, and the total production is estimated at some 10,000,000 bushels, a portion of which it has been decided by the Government to export. The grading of this export wheat is being carried out by Messrs. Ferrier and Co., Government Graders at Lyttelton, and by Messrs. George Wills and Co., who act in that capacity at Timaru. Under the Wheat Trade Regulations it is permissible to appeal to the Chief Grain-grader should any dispute arise as to kind, quality, or condition, and a fairly large number of these disputes have been referred to him for settlement.

During the year inquiries for type samples of New Zealand grain came from the London and Liverpool Corn Exchanges, and it is understood that these are being forwarded by the various local Chambers of Commerce. The samples are to be sealed samples, which means that they must be deposited with a body such as the Corn Exchange or Chamber of Commerce for reference, and the fact that they go through the local Chambers of Commerce makes them acceptable by the trade associations abroad. The Wheat Controller has adopted this method of circulating f.a.q. samples of this season's wheat.