

some butter and potatoes, while others further north use horse-power chaff-cutters for providing winter feed, but stock raising and fattening are the principal farming features. An increased number of cattle, horses, and sheep of fine quality have been sent up during the year to the northern markets; a considerable acreage of bush has been felled, and grass and turnips sown; and altogether the prospects of the south were never brighter. The present position is as follows: Number of tenants, 201; area held, 44,789 acres; area brought into profitable use, 11,511 acres; value of improvements effected by tenants, £31,264 (exclusive of Township of Runanga, pastoral and miscellaneous tenantry, noted below).

*Township of Runanga.*—Tenantry, 208. This town is situated about four miles from Greymouth and half a mile from the coal-mines, and, being within the State Coal-mine Reserve, no freeholds could be granted, so the allotments were offered to the public on lease in perpetuity. Out of 352 sections submitted, 208 have been taken up, and, as new streets are opened in the bush, the balance will ere long be applied for. A marked improvement has taken place during the past twelve months; there are fifty-nine houses built, and new ones are in progress; several shops have already been established; a fine school has been erected in a spacious reserve which has been cleared out of the dense forest, and a thoroughly equipped railway-station occupies a central position. The appearance of this rising township is very creditable, considering that two years ago the whole area was covered with dense forest, and its prospects are very encouraging. For details of the expenditure on streets, &c., see Mr. District Surveyor Wilson's report appended to my survey report (published as part of C.—1A).

*Pastoral Leaseholds.*—There are 149 lessees who occupy areas of pastoral country. Some of these runs are of considerable size, but the majority are of small extent, and are almost wholly covered with forest, in which large herds of cattle are bred. The bulk of these cattle are fattened in the cultivated paddocks. Sheep, again, are grazed upon the grassy islands in the river-bottoms, and also on the tussock pastures of the mountains, whilst large mobs of horses are bred and reared on the native herbage of the river-flats. Remedial legislation is expected in connection with the present short terms of leases and the limited compensation for improvements. Still, many runholders are very enterprising in fencing, clearing, and grassing portions of their runs. During the year, stock of all kinds on these runs has increased, the wool has improved in quality and quantity, horses have realised good prices, sheep have had a brisk demand, fat cattle have met with good markets, and appearances are very hopeful for the coming season.

*Miscellaneous.*—Tenantry, 229. With the exception of a few lessees of coal, oil, and flax areas, the other holders occupy allotments of small reserves, &c., and, having only temporary titles, their improvements are limited. Yet many of these occupiers rear fair numbers of stock, and sell moderate quantities of potatoes, honey, and fruit. They have had good prices during the year, and the outlook for the next season is promising. Numbers of these small holders employ much spare time at the sawmills, gold-mining, sleeper-cutting, &c.

#### GENERAL.

The reports of the Commissioner and Rangers indicate that the settlers, north and south, are fulfilling the conditions and obligations under which they occupy their holdings, whilst most friendly feelings exist as between Crown and tenant.

The district maintains its progressive character, and, despite the inclement season, is doing well and evidences a continuance of its present prosperity. After a fairly open winter, spring set in cold and wet, and no growing period followed until very late in the season, consequently delay was experienced in planting crops. Very poor harvesting weather ensued, and this still further delayed farming operations. Fruit has been comparatively a failure, very little of marketable quality being secured. Honey has necessarily been of moderate quality; still, several apiaries have had a fair yield. Potatoes again have suffered severely from the blight, and many farmers lost large areas, despite their spraying operations. Carrots, mangolds, and turnips have done well; the oat-crop is a fair average; a plentiful quantity of hay was fortunately saved in good condition, and there was hardly ever a better season for grass. Dairying has been very successful, and the factories have had plentiful supplies of milk and cream, with cheering financial results. A new dairy factory, fully equipped with the latest machinery, has been erected in the Arahura Valley and promises splendid returns. Creameries are also being established in various settlements, and eventually dairy factories will follow. In many localities separators (horse and hand power) are used, while one enterprising settler at Okuru uses steam. Horses, cattle, and sheep have done well, and good prices have been obtained in the local markets; the yearly improvement of the animals forwarded for sale is very apparent and is richly rewarding the foresight of those who have imported pedigree stock. The wool-clip has been larger than before, and of excellent quality. More attention has been paid to agriculture and renewal of old pastures, with better types of machinery. Buildings of all kinds, fencing, and a fair acreage of bush-felling has gone on apace, while, despite the bad "burn" obtainable during the year, large areas have been sown in turnips and grass, and are looking first class.

The farming lands which have been thrown open for selection have had keen competition, and a good class of settler, local or outside, has been obtained.

The outlook for the coming year is very reassuring; there is plenty of winter feed in field, stack, and shed; the farms are well stocked, and energetic work is progressing in every class of farming. The dairy industry is expanding; an increased number of local markets, due to the establishment of sawmills, flax-mills, &c., will be reciprocally beneficial to all classes, while the frequent inquiries with regard to the blocks of settlement lands which are now being subdivided for selection prove that the desire for farming areas is as eager as ever.