

judging by the quality of the land and the activity of the settlers. The establishing of this settlement is in a sense an experiment, in that about four-fifths of each allotment is forest land, the remaining fifth being open country. That the settlers are energetic and enterprising is evidenced by their decision to establish a creamery in conjunction with the proposed dairy factory at Murchison. They have guaranteed 150 cows. Braeburn has all the essentials of a bright and cheery settlement, and I have no doubt of its progress and ultimate success.

F. W. FLANAGAN,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

MARLBOROUGH.

I have the honour to report shortly upon the present position, progress, and prospects of the settlement estates (of which there are nine) within the Marlborough Land District, containing a total area of about 115,000 acres. This area directly supports about a thousand persons, and is scattered about Marlborough generally; but the largest and by far the most important block is situated between the Awatere River and the east coast; this has an area of about 94,000 acres, and is composed of the Richmond Brook, Starborough, Blind River, and Flaxbourne Estates, and although chiefly pastoral land, has a large area of good agricultural land, where a considerable quantity of barley, oats, &c., is grown. Although it may generally be considered a dry area, very fair results have been obtained from cropping, the past season being rather a favourable one for this class of farming; but, unfortunately, part of this country suffered considerably by caterpillars, which in many instances ruined nearly the whole crop. The price obtained for grain and chaff has been very disappointing when compared with last year's returns, but, on the other hand, wool has been higher, and I think I am right in saying that owing to the moist season this part of Marlborough has never produced so many fat sheep and lambs, and, although these did not command a very high price, they must have yielded a fairly satisfactory return to the owners. Cattle do not appear to be much kept in this central block, possibly from the generally exposed nature of the country or the little profit obtainable from them; on the other hand, the one small settlement at Kaikoura is used almost exclusively for dairying, and appears to be well adapted for it, owing partly to the richness of the land and partly to the proximity to a very fine cheese-factory.

The total number of persons residing upon Settlement lands at the date of this return, exclusive of floating population engaged on the railway and road works, is 1,026, or an increase of seventy-one over last year's return.

The total number of sheep depastured on the 115,000 acres is 98,457, an increase of 508 on last year; total number of cattle, 1,265, practically the same as last year's returns; the number of horses, 1,124, as compared with 963 last year, an increase of 161; the number of pigs was 230, an increase of 115. The land in white crops this year is 9,348 acres, as compared with 6,719 acres last year, an increase of 2,629 acres; total area in green crops, 6,333 acres, against 4,483 acres last year, an increase of 1,850 acres; and the total area under cultivated grasses is 26,852 acres, against 23,951 acres last year, an increase of 2,901 acres. It will be observed that, although all the stock except cattle show a small increase, there has been a considerable increase in the area of both white and root crops, without any reduction of the number of stock kept.

By last year's return the total improvements were valued at £119,411; this year's return puts them down as £159,261, an increase of £39,850.

As the prosperity of these settlements is necessarily very largely dependent upon so many things over which we have no control, such as climatic conditions and market prices of stock and farm produce, it is very difficult to give even a fairly reliable forecast of their future prosperity. It can, however, be safely stated that we have here a very fine class of settlers, and, unless the conditions are decidedly adverse, they may reasonably expect to do better in future, especially in the Flaxbourne Settlement, because it is anticipated that the railway will be opened up nearer the settlement at an early date, and it may reasonably be expected that the caterpillar pest will not recur two years in succession.

F. STEPHENSON SMITH,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

WESTLAND.

Good progress has been made and good results obtained by the tenants on both Poerua and Kokatahi Settlements. Very little cropping is done on either settlement. The holdings are used for grazing, the only crops grown being used for feed. The oaten and meadow-hay crops have been well saved, and there should be no shortage of winter feed. Eighteen out of a total of twenty-six tenants are supplying milk to the factories, which are conveniently situated to both settlements, and very satisfactory results are being obtained. The combined herd of dairy cows totals 336, a number of which have been bred from good imported stock. The remaining eight tenants are utilizing their holdings for rearing and fattening stock for the market.

G. J. ROBERTS,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.