

## MARLBOROUGH.

## LANDS OPENED FOR SALE OR SELECTION.

The total area of Crown lands offered for selection during the year was 32,322 acres, the principal blocks being situated in the Wakamarina, Tennyson, and Whernside Survey Districts. There were also 2,568 acres acquired by eleven selectors without competition. During the year six small-grazing-run leases under the Land Act, 1885, comprising an area of 2,880 acres, expired and were renewed for a further term, the rental being increased from £36 10s. 2d. to £74 1s. 10d. The total area taken up during the year on settlement conditions was 21,297 acres.

## OPERATIONS DURING THE COMING YEAR.

The only block that will be open during the coming year of any dimensions is situated in the Upper Pelorus Valley, Heringa Survey District, and comprises the watershed of the Tinline and Heringa Rivers; the area is about 10,000 acres, and is divided into twelve sections. About 2,500 acres in the Opouri, situated in the State forest, but which has been cut out by the sawmillers, may before the end of the year be offered in sections of about 200 acres, and will make suitable dairy farms, being within a few miles of the Flat Creek Dairy Factory.

## THE DAIRY INDUSTRY.

The number of dairy factories remains the same as last year—viz., seven—and the output of cheese is also practically the same, being 555 tons. The dairy industry in the southern portion of Marlborough is responsible for large increases in the value of land suitable for dairying, as much as £60 per acre being paid. The two cheese-factories at Kaikoura turned out 287 tons, an increase of 54 tons for the year, and this means the circulation of a large amount of ready cash among the small farmers in the neighbourhood. The lessees on Rainford Settlement, who are all carrying on dairying, are doing well.

## GOLD-MINING.

This industry, which has been at a very low ebb for some years, shows signs of a revival. A strong company, after thoroughly prospecting the Golden Bar Reef in the Wakamarina, has now erected an up-to-date battery and employs forty hands. If successful this may lead to the further development of the district, the Wakamarina again taking the place it once held as one of the largest gold-producing districts of the Dominion.

## ARREARS OF RENTAL.

The arrears, excluding the current half-yearly payments, now only amount to £618 10s. 6d., a decrease compared with last year of £514 6s. 1d.

## RANGERS' REPORTS AND INSPECTIONS.

The number of Rangers' inspections during the year was 492 over an area of 207,522 acres. The amount of improvements required by the Act was £106,685, and the amount actually done £240,419.

W. H. SKINNER,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

## WESTLAND.

Since taking charge of the district I have visited most portions of it from the northern boundary down to the Waiho River, with a view to becoming acquainted with its peculiarities, in order to decide as to the most suitable system of administration to adopt. The inspections I have made have impressed me as to the possibilities of the district for grazing and dairying purposes, and I am confident that the ruling prices are cheaper than in any other portion of the Dominion. This is to a certain extent accounted for by the isolation of the district, but were the grass-growing qualities of the land more generally known an influx of settlers from other districts would certainly result. Several properties have recently been purchased by persons not resident in the district, and in all cases the new owners appear to be very well satisfied with their bargains. The humid climatic conditions existing are unfavourable for agriculture, but feed is generally plentiful, as the dry seasons are not of sufficient duration to injure the grass, while the absence of lengthy periods of frost or extreme cold permits of growth during the greater part of the winter. The whole of the existing dairy factories and creameries have produced very encouraging results, and the coming season will witness the incorporation of two more creameries. Until recent years farmers have devoted their attentions almost exclusively to rearing and fattening cattle, but the enhanced returns to be obtained from dairying are inducing them to promote the establishment of dairy factories. Prices ruling for lands, more especially in the vicinity of dairy factories, have made very decided advances lately.

The past season has been extremely favourable for grass-growing, and I have noticed that in some localities the feed has been allowed to go to waste on account of insufficient stock, attributable to a large extent to the shortage in the supply of store cattle. The making of hay is not always attended with success, as the climate is somewhat variable, but farmers would do well to turn their surplus feed into ensilage, as the danger of loss would thus be minimized while the product would provide splendid winter feed.