

the next few months. The aggregate value of improvements required by the terms of the lease is £240,132 9s. 4d., and the total value effected £605,374 4s. 2d. The stock depastured on the settlements include 286,852 sheep, 7,233 head of cattle, 5,772 horses, 2,856 pigs. The annual rental of the occupied land is £101,094, and the total receipts since the inception of the system in 1894 amount to £822,193 8s. 4d.

The reports of the Crown Lands Rangers on all the land-for-settlements estates throughout the district record a steady increase of prosperity amongst the settlers, a most satisfactory compliance with all the conditions of the leases, and on the whole a favourable season for all classes of farming. In nearly all cases settlers are well satisfied with their holdings, though those on small sections naturally wish to enlarge their farms as they get financially stronger and their families grow up.

T. N. BRODRICK,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

OTAGO.

During the year now ended there has been only one new settlement opened—viz., Conical Hills. This was offered towards the end of the year in fifty-two allotments aggregating 9,914 acres, two sections being held back with a view to their being offered as one allotment of an area of about 600 acres. All the allotments offered, excepting a few small ones, were taken up.

The Crown Lands Ranger reports on the settlements generally as under :—

The condition of the settlers is quite the reverse of what it was last year, when they suffered from the effects of a disastrous drought. This year the rainfall has been much greater than usual, consequently a very large area has been sown in wheat and oats. The area sown in green crop is also much greater than in past years. It is not often that the farmers of North Otago complain of having too much moisture, but that has been the complaint this season. The subsoil received a thorough soaking during the spring months, consequently the yields of grain are phenomenal in many cases, upwards of 115 bushels of oats per acre being threshed in one instance, and as high as 50 to 60 bushels of wheat per acre. Last year the average yield was about 12 bushels of wheat and 25 of oats per acre. The turnip crop is not quite as good as might have been expected after so bountiful a rainfall, but the crop will be good and above the average for some years past. The potato crop last year was very poor on account of the drought and the wireworm. This year this crop is expected to be much above the average of former years.

In North Otago the grass was never better, there being abundance of feed which will carry the stock well during the winter. That, taken in conjunction with the turnip crops, will, it is expected, enable the farmers to carry more stock than last year. The market price for fat lambs remains good at 14s. to 15s. The price obtained for wool was on the whole better than last season. The dairy industry is in a very flourishing condition this year, the supply of milk to the creameries being far in excess of what it has been in past seasons.

Much the same may be said of the settlements in South Otago. They are all looking remarkably well. The grain crops are very heavy, and the yield promises to be much ahead of former years, while the turnip crops are much better than in North Otago. Generally speaking, the prospects of the settlers, both leaseholders and freeholders, are exceedingly bright, and the splendid season experienced will go far to compensate them for the losses incurred on account of the droughts of the last few years.

E. H. WILMOT,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

SOUTHLAND.

There have not been any new settlements purchased during the year. In the eastern portion of the district, where dairying is the chief occupation of the settlers, there has been an abundance of feed, but the cold and unsettled weather has somewhat operated against the yield of milk. Still, it is generally agreed that the season's returns will more than reach those of the past. The white crops, generally speaking, are very good, but the root-crops will, as a rule, not be up to the usual standard of excellence. The settlers in this part of the district are keeping their holdings in a high state of fertility by the application of lime and other artificial fertilizers coupled with a judicious system of cultivation. This year an area of 2,770 acres of new grass has been laid down. The settlers in the western portion of the district are chiefly occupied in mixed farming and grazing, and the high prices ruling for all produce have been of material assistance to them. The climatic conditions have been very suitable for the light lands in this district, the result being that there are some really excellent white crops, while the root crops are looking healthy and of good promise. An area of 1,682 acres has been laid down in new grass. Taking the settlements as a whole, it may be said that the conditions of lease are very well carried out, there being only a few defaulters; and the settlers now appear to be in a very satisfactory position in every way. The required amount of improvements is £60,477, and the value actually made is £94,477.

G. H. M. McCURE,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.