

A large number of tenants are with the Expeditionary Forces, and the majority of these have been granted remission of rent during their absence at the front.

A new industry has been commenced in the Gowan Valley, near Lake Rotoroa—that of making wood-wool for packing purposes, three-ply boards, &c. The plant is now working, and should make a good return to the owners when the industry becomes properly established.

## MARLBOROUGH.

(H. D. McKELLAR, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

From a pastoral point of view the past season has been one of the best on record. A good supply of rain distributed throughout the year and the absence of hot winds provided an abundance of feed; consequently stock have done well and returns have been good throughout the district, although the southern part has not fared quite so well as the northern.

On agricultural areas the crops suffered somewhat from the wet, but the increased values made amends for this. Cropping was not so successful in the southern portion of the district.

The dairying industry continues to flourish, as is evidenced by the all-round increase in the returns from the various factories, and high prices have ruled. By the aid of motor vehicles and launches isolated settlers are now able to swell the factory returns, and in consequence improve their position.

Floods did much damage to the main road and bridge approaches at the southern end of the district in September last.

Very little wheat was grown notwithstanding the urgent need for such crop, and there appears little inclination to improve matters next season.

The calling-up of men for military service has had a marked effect on the farming community, as is evidenced by decreased cropping, spread of noxious weeds and rabbits. The conscription of married men will further emphasize this aspect of the situation, the farmers themselves being taken and their holdings being left to management by others who cannot do as well generally, considering prevailing conditions. Four Crown tenants have joined the Expeditionary Force, one being a discharged soldier. The exact number is not available, as all have not come under official notice.

*Pastoral Runs.*—Leases covering a total area of 38,600 acres, in three runs, expiring in February, 1919, were referred to the Classification Commissioners, and being found unsuitable for subdivision were offered in accordance with the law at an increased rental to the present lessees.

*Education Endowments.*—All the lands that are of value from a farming point of view are let; those unlet are town sections, chiefly in Picton, where there is little demand. Where possible these small areas are let on year-to-year tenures. During the year three leases expired and the lessees were offered renewals. In two cases the renewals were accepted at increased rents. The remaining one, a Picton section, was not accepted.

*Land Board.*—The Land Board held twelve ordinary meetings and one special meeting. Death removed one member, Mr. Alex. Mackay, whose loss is much regretted. The vacancy was filled by the appointment of Mr. Archibald McCallum.

*Lands to be opened.*—It is estimated that about 2,860 acres of new land will be offered for selection to discharged soldiers. The bulk of this area is situated in the Opouri Valley. An area of about 260 acres near Renwicktown will be subdivided into small holdings suitable for fruit-farming.

*Flax Industry.*—This is flourishing, high prices still being obtained for fibre, and a plentiful supply of labour available, many discharged soldiers being employed.

*Mining Industry.*—At present all efforts in this respect are directed towards the production of scheelite. The New Zealand Consolidated Mine at Deep Creek continues to be the chief producer, prospecting being conducted vigorously; one new battery has been erected, and tenders have been called for the erection of another, all working scheelite reefs.

*Fruit Industry.*—This gives promise of becoming one of the foremost industries in the district. The establishment of a local packing-shed and canning-factory is the outcome of successful co-operation. Owing to absence of shipping-facilities the Fruitgrowers' Association is successfully marketing the present season's crop locally. This is a step in the right direction. Young trees are coming into bearing, and planting of new areas continues.

*Lime Industry.*—Two plants are in operation, one at Kaikoura and one at Ward. At the former an excellent plant exists, but export to Canterbury is badly handicapped by the high rise in freights. At Ward the supply of soft lime workable without machinery being practically exhausted, the works have been closed, the heavy cost of machinery and uncertainty of labour preventing further development in the meantime.

*Noxious Weeds.*—Foxglove and blackberry are very bad in the north of Marlborough. The eradication of them in the ordinary way by cutting and grubbing is impracticable, and no amount of money spent in this way would solve the problem. The only solution seems to lie in closer settlement, and the education of the young in farming communities in the good husbandry of the land. There are practically no weeds on the lands of the industrious farmer. In the southern district noxious weeds have been gradually creeping in for the last few years, and will sooner or later become troublesome if steps are not taken to keep them in check.

*Revaluations of Lands.*—Nine settlers on Lynton Downs Settlement and five on Hillersden have availed themselves of section 15 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1915, and all with the exception of three on the first-named settlement have obtained reductions in the value of their holdings.