

The tenants have experienced the same vicissitudes as the rest of the farmers in Canterbury. The holdings used merely for pastoral purposes have come off best. With the exception of gorse hedges, many of which have remained untrimmed owing to scarcity of labour, the conditions of occupancy have been observed.

Land Board.—During the year there were twelve ordinary meetings and one special meeting of the Land Board, some of these running into two days, at which 187 applications to transfer leases were approved and fifteen declined.

Cheviot Estate.—On the agricultural holdings the cereal crops were again disappointing. Wheat was grown on about 700 acres, and the average return is not expected to reach 15 bushels per acre. In some instances the crops were not reaped at all. Smut, mildew, rust, and depredations by caterpillar were all in evidence. Also, approximately 1,000 acres of oats was more or less spoilt by weather conditions; potatoes were blighted, and turnips soft and fly-bitten. The rain came at the wrong time; 153 points fell in November and 656 points in December. 1,828 points fell more this past year than in the year previous; however, this suited the sheepowners and cream-suppliers. All live-stock has prospered. The hill country was green with abundance of grass and clover all the year. Lambing was fair, about 90 per cent. from about 50,000 ewes.

OTAGO.

(ROBERT T. SADD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the past year land-settlement has been to a great extent restricted owing to the subdivisions of pastoral runs being held back so as to give soldiers now on active service an opportunity to compete as discharged soldiers. The present lessees of these runs have been given extensions for twelve months in the meantime; also all sections suitable for that purpose have been set apart for discharged soldiers. As only a limited number of discharged soldiers are inquiring for land and the general public are debarred from competing, land-settlement has been nearly at a standstill.

The Mount Burke Run, containing 45,000 acres, was cut up into three runs, and one offered to the public and two to discharged soldiers; the two latter were not selected, and have since been offered for general application and selected.

The Downs Run, of 3,962 acres, was subdivided into fourteen sections for general application, and all were selected by local people to supplement their living as miners. The number of tenants for the past year shows an increase of sixty-four, with an increase of rentals of £1,700. The lands open for sale and selection comprised 49,610 acres, about half the amount that was offered in the previous year. The licenses of five pastoral runs suitable for subdivision, containing 213,580 acres, which expired on the 28th February, 1918, have been extended for twelve months.

Owing to the exceptionally high prices of fencing and building materials, and the high prices and difficulty of procuring stock, land-settlement is a difficult problem. Ordinary fencing-wire is now five times the price it was before the war, and other materials have gone up in proportion. The consequence is that though well-established holdings are making very large profits out of the increased prices of stock and produce, more recent selectors with limited capital are finding it very difficult to make a success of their selections. The settlers in north Otago have had a very fair year owing to a good rainfall, though the wheat and oat crops did not thresh out as well as was expected and, owing to showery weather being experienced just before the oats came into ear, some of these crops were affected with rust. The turnip crop is not so good as usual, but the rape crop is well grown and will provide abundance of feed for lambs. Owing to heavy rainfalls there is a good growth of grass, and there is not sufficient stock in the district to eat it down; also a great deal of hay has been saved this year. The lambing generally has been quite up to the average, and consequently the freezing-works will be kept at work and running well into the year. Large additions have been made to both the Pukeuri and South Otago Freezing-works. The price of stock has more than maintained the high level of last year. Fat lambs are bringing 25s. to 28s., fat ewes up to 31s., and better classes of sheep 40s.; fat bullocks up to £27. Grass being plentiful, the dairying industry is flourishing, and the high price for butter-fat makes this a good source of income, with a supply of ready money each month. In the southern districts the crops, although not very heavy, are fair, and many of the farmers have grown fair crops of wheat. Feed is plentiful everywhere. The rape crop is good and the turnips looking well. It has been a good season for fruit; nearly all the stone-fruits have yielded well, and the apples are giving a heavy yield. This industry is now commanding more attention in north Otago, and the young orchards are coming on well.

Irrigation.—Several of the settlers on Galloway Flat have been supplied with water for irrigation from the Manorburn Dam pending the completion of the Manuherikia scheme. Earnscliffe Flat and part of Earnscliffe Run, resumed for close settlement, have not been opened owing to the water rights being all held for mining purposes; and although the mining is practically abandoned, the rights cannot be acquired except at prohibitive prices.

Rangers' Inspections.—The small number of inspections of Crown leaseholds and land-for-settlements holdings was on account of no inspections being made where the conditions after the sixth year had been complied with. A great deal of the time of the different Rangers was occupied in reports on miscellaneous applications, revaluing pastoral runs, small grazing-runs, and education-reserve leases; also dealings with the discharged soldiers in stock, implements, inspecting improvements, &c.

Exemptions from rent, either wholly or in part, were granted to thirty-seven Crown tenants on military service.