

Flax Industry.—This industry, although in a small way, is still flourishing, and generally a good year has been experienced. Prices fell somewhat towards the end of the year, but not sufficiently to cause the mills to cease working.

Mining Industry.—This comprises one mine, which produces principally scheelite in payable quantity. The company working the mine has enjoyed a good measure of success during the war, scheelite being essential to the manufacturing of high-grade steel for big guns, &c. Apart from this there is a little alluvial gold-mining carried on in various parts, but its success is doubtful.

Lime-works.—The works at Ward are as yet undeveloped and can supply only local requirements. The only other works are situated at Kaikoura, where a first-class plant has been erected. A good trade with Canterbury was being developed, but on account of the almost prohibitive freight charges between Kaikoura and Christchurch this has been interrupted in the meantime, and only a small business is being carried on with the surrounding district.

Noxious Weeds and Rabbits.—As already mentioned, these are not being kept down, owing mainly, it is considered, to the shortage of labour, and it is hoped with the repatriation of the oversea troops that the farmers generally, in their own interests and the country's, will grapple with the nuisances and prevent further spread.

WESTLAND.

(R. S. GALBRAITH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

General.—During the past year the climatic conditions in Westland were not very favourable: the season was unusually late, little or no warm weather being experienced until February and March, and this interfered materially with the saving of the crops, which consist principally of oats, &c., for hay grown by settlers for their own requirements, also in most cases no attempt could be made to burn off any bush felled.

Most of the settled land is used for rearing and fattening stock and for dairying. There has been plenty of grass throughout the district, and farmers generally have done very well.

Prices for fat and store cattle are still good, but the last two or three sales have shown a downward tendency, and this applies also to the sheep-market, the latest quotations being: Ox cattle, £14 15s.; cows and heifers, £11 10s. to £12 10s.; sheep, £1 5s. to £1 10s.; lambs, £1.

The importation of pedigree stock from other districts is year by year improving the quality of the cattle raised, and there is keen competition for the young stock at the annual sales.

The butter and cheese factories have been kept working at their utmost capacity, prices received for butter-fat being as high as 1s. 8d. per pound.

Flax-millers in the district, generally speaking, have had a good season, which is now drawing to a close for the winter; prices have, however, fallen considerably of late.

The lime-works recently started at Ross are producing a first-class agricultural lime, which has been found very satisfactory by farmers who have used it. It is anticipated that the present somewhat high cost of production will shortly be reduced by improving the methods of traction.

The mining proposition in the Arahura Valley referred to in last year's report has been proceeded with, and the company has now completed a large dredge fitted with special appliances for replacing the top soil over the worked ground, and this dredge has just commenced operations.

CANTERBURY.

(H. D. M. HASZARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The lessees of the pastoral runs were not so favoured by the weather during the last year as in the previous one; the winter was unusually severe, and pastoralists experienced a most trying and anxious time. Numerous heavy snowfalls were experienced, and the loss of sheep on some stations amounted to over 50 per cent., consequently the lambing was much below the average, and it will take some time to stock up again with the right class of sheep. Shearing was greatly delayed on account of the influenza epidemic and the difficulty in securing experienced musterers. Spring was late, but the wet season prior to Christmas brought the feed on well, so that pasture is plentiful, and the prospect of wintering stock is fairly good.

The grain-yields have been much above the average, and in some instances abnormal—so much so, indeed, that when threshing results begin to come in the market took a decided drop on account of the plentiful supplies.

The benefits of lucerne and linseed have become more generally known, and they are now being grown with most profitable results. Unfortunately, for some unknown reasons, turnips do not seem to do as well as in former years.

Cheviot Estate.—This estate has been reported on so often that any further comments are superfluous, and it still remains probably the most prosperous settlement ever acquired by the Crown, though perhaps Waikakahi and Rosewell Settlements run it very close.

OTAGO.

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

Land-settlement in Otago during the past twelve months has been almost at a standstill owing to the war being so long protracted, and all lands suitable for settlement by discharged soldiers being held over in the meantime.

An area of 653 acres was opened to the general public for selection, and an area of 35,491 acres to discharged soldiers, consisting principally of the two subdivisions of the Dasher Run.

The high prices of fencing and other material and stock further increased to such an extent that it was really a benefit to prospective settlers and to the Crown that the settlement of land was reduced to a minimum.