

*Wool.*—The wool-sales opened at prices considerably lower than the closing sales of last year, but advanced slightly towards the end of the sales, the coarser wool making the greater comparative rise, and growers of this class of wool had better returns than was anticipated from the prices obtained at the opening sales.

The wet winter and spring somewhat affected the growth of wool, inasmuch as the clip was light compared with other years, and although the prices for wool were below those of last season nevertheless reasonably good prices were obtained for the clips generally.

*Dairying.*—The late wet spring had a serious effect on all classes of stock, particularly dairy cows. The opening months of the season were somewhat disappointing and showed how the cows were affected by the weather conditions. Then followed the drought, retarding the growth of feed. However, the autumn brought an improvement, and the cows are still maintaining a good flow of milk. The price of butterfat has been good, and store cattle have improved in value—no doubt partly brought about by the wholesale slaughter of calves during the last few years.

*Stock.*—The price of sheep dropped in sympathy with that of wool, and the drought tended to keep prices down, even though the late wool-sales showed an improvement on the opening sessions. The market throughout the summer was very uncertain, and as usual Marlborough prices were from 3s. to 5s. below the Addington sales. Beef-prices improved, and the effect of this improvement is apparent in the dairy districts, where the settlers are keeping their calves.

*Agriculture.*—The crops this year are generally light and below the average yield. Owing to the wet conditions in the spring, peas and other spring crops were late-sown and came in for the full effects of the drought, consequently returns were very much below the average. Clover shut up for seed suffered in a like manner.

*Orchard Industry.*—The apple crop this season has been a record one, being far in excess of former years, and the number of cases exported constitutes a record for the district. However, the industry is far from being stabilized. The cost of marketing the fruit is still too high, and leaves no margin of profit for the grower.

*Timber.*—This industry is still active in Marlborough, though prospects of the output continuing the same are not bright, as the natural resources are gradually, but surely, becoming exhausted.

Mills are now working in areas that previously had been milled, and small isolated patches of bush are being eagerly sought after.

Three mills are working in the Tinline Valley, two in the Pelorus, one in the Wakamarina, two in the Ronga, one in the Tunakina, and three in the Opouri. There is also a small mill operating in Pelorus Sound, and several small plants in pine plantations.

*Flax.*—The good prices ruling for fibre keep half a dozen mills working in the district, and good-quality flax-fibre has been marketed.

*Poultry-farming.*—Marlborough, on account of its dry climate, is considered by experts to be one of the most suitable districts in New Zealand for poultry-raising, and this is borne out by the progress the industry has made during the last few years.

Although there are only between twenty and thirty poultry-farmers commercially engaged in the industry, the Marlborough Egg Circle has 150 suppliers, and the number of eggs marketed during the year was slightly over 800,000, at an average price, for all grades, of 1s. 10d. per dozen, being an appreciable advance on last year.

The high price of fowl-feed—wheat, oats, maize, &c.—makes it essential that poultry-farmers must raise the standard of their flocks, and with this end in view many well-bred and high-priced birds have been imported, so that this district to-day has some of the finest egg-laying strains in the Dominion.

Generally the condition and egg-laying qualities of the birds to be seen in the district bear out the contention that Marlborough is eminently suited for poultry-farming, and those engaged in the industry have prospects of a bright future.

*Bee-farming.*—Generally the season was very poor, and the output of honey much below the average.

*Lime-works.*—Mr. Thompson's lime-works at Ward are still working smoothly, though the output for this year is somewhat less than the previous year. Reports from farmers having had experience of this lime speak very highly of the advantages of its use, particularly regarding the districts of the Picton Road, Kaituna Valley, &c.

The price—25s. on trucks at Ward—is, I think, still too high, because the districts most requiring lime are so far from the railway that the cartage makes it too expensive for the average farmer.

*Noxious Weeds.*—The position with regard to the spread of noxious weeds is unchanged. The spread of blackberry is becoming more serious on the poor class of country that hitherto carried light bush.

On large tracts of waste land—river-beds, &c.—where gorse and broom present such a big problem, the systematic planting of *Pinus insignis* seems to me to be a most effective means of dealing with their spread, and in my opinion the money spent annually to cut these weeds would be better spent in planting, for besides being more effective it would, in time, become a national asset.

*Tree-planting.*—As a rule the average farmer is not much interested in, nor does he realize the value of, trees, but it is pleasing to report the increased interest being taken by the farmer in this matter, and there have been many thousands of trees planted during the year.

In what might be termed "dry Marlborough"—that area between the Wairau and Ure Rivers—there is room for millions of trees. The systematic planting of shelter-belts on the farms throughout this dry, wind-swept area would in a few years do away with the present arid conditions and bring about greater returns from the land, thus adding greatly to the productivity of the district.

Other avenues by which the progress of settlement and increased production may be attained in Marlborough are: The control of the rabbit; the control of fires on native pasture; the acquisition and subdivision of large estates; the better communication with outside markets.