

DEBENTURES DUE 1ST APRIL AND 1ST MAY, 1904.

On the 1st April last a parcel of debentures amounting to £750,000 fell due, and on the 1st May following another parcel amounting to £527,950 also matured. Of these sums £647,100 was payable in London and £630,850 in the colony and Australia. At the time when it became necessary for us to see that proper provision for their renewal or redemption was made, investment rates in the colony and in Australia were high, and, as regards London, investors could do so well in short-time securities that it soon became apparent that we must be prepared to pay off a good deal of the paper maturing.

I am the more pleased, therefore, to be able to tell you that, notwithstanding a very stringent money-market in London and with high interest-rates ruling throughout Australasia, our renewal terms were sufficiently attractive to induce a considerable number of holders to reinvest on terms mutually advantageous. For renewals we offered in the colony a further term of five years at the same rate of interest—namely, 4 per cent.; in London the term was made four years. The renewal debentures contain a clause enabling the holders to convert their security into £106 of 3-per-cent. inscribed stock for every £100 of debentures at any time during the first two years. Brokerage to banks and brokers was also allowed.

As a result of these offers, I am pleased to say that in this colony and in Australia parcels amounting to £153,100 were sent in for renewal on the 1st April and £263,350 on the 1st May. In London the renewals were £112,400 on the 1st April and £6,100 on the 1st May. Debentures which came in for redemption on the respective due dates were provided for by the issue of 4-per-cent. debentures of four years currency.

I think the colony must be congratulated upon the very satisfactory result of our renewal operations, when we come to consider the state of the money-markets in all parts of the world. New Zealand Government stock, I am glad to say, still commands the best prices amongst the Australasian Group, but the Agent-General informs me that very little business is done in this Group at all, as investors fight shy of Australian Government securities, owing to the setback the States sustained from misrepresentation and the continued droughts of late years. Our sympathies are with our neighbours, and it is to be regretted that because New Zealand is so often considered a portion of Australia our stock is thereby depreciated, our credit injured, and our pockets suffer.

AGRICULTURAL SETTLERS INCREASE POPULATION.

In accordance with what I placed before you in my Budget last session, I informed you that very few settlers of the agricultural class in England found their way to this colony. The lower rates of fares to other countries and free grants of lands caused the stream of immigration to flow to Canada and America.

I am happy to say that we have been able to induce the Shaw-Savill, the New Zealand Shipping, and the Federal Companies to bring out passengers at considerably reduced rates. Each intended settler has to be approved by the Agent-General, and must be possessed of at least £25 on landing in the colony. The passenger rates are as follows :—

Full Rate.	Payment by Passenger.	Bonus paid by Government.	Companies' Reduction.
	£	£	£
Second-class, £38	27	4	7
Third-class, £19	10	4	5
In four-berth cabin
In two-berth cabin, £21	12	4	5