

The systematic development of a butter-market in America is recommended to the attention of New Zealand exporters.

Prices are slowly recovering from the slump which set in two to three years ago, though for beef they are still low. Ruling prices in the district are as follow for the past season: Ox beef, from 25s. to 36s. a hundredweight; heifer beef, from 21s. to 33s.; cow beef, from 18s. to 30s.; mutton, 5d. to 8½d., and lamb, 10d. to 1s. a pound. Butterfat fetched 1s. 7d. a pound in the earlier part of the season, but dropped to 1s. 5d., though at the latter price there is a bonus at the end of the season. Crossbred wool began at 6½d. and ends at 9d. a pound. In store cattle, two-and-a-half- to three-year steers ran from £3 to £4 each, heifers the same age from £2 10s. to £3. The prices for old cows run from £1 4s. to £1 10s., and sheep £1 8s. to £1 10s.

The Ross and Kokatahi limeworks are still in active operation. Flax-milling is practically at a standstill at present.

The output of timber for the year is 47,000,000 superficial feet, against 48,000,000 last year. The prices show a slight drop, though the number of mills operating is increasing. There are some eighty sawmills in Westland, though in one or two cases mills have temporarily closed down for want of orders. The timber is one of the chief industries in the district, and it is satisfactory to report that conditions are better than a year ago, and prospects generally brighter. The opening of the Otira Tunnel will reduce freight about 50 per cent., and stimulate the industry generally. Local sawmillers are of opinion that Canterbury, for many years to come, will purchase silver-pine fencing-posts, which are keenly sought after, but the freight on which has hitherto been prohibitive.

The American gold-dredging company at Rimu Flat is still in active operation. The area dredged during the last twelve months is 17 acres, 13,000,000 cubic yards of earth and gravel have been handled, and 12,500 ounces of gold obtained. The land is a stony, marshy flat, covered with bush, and useless for farming purposes. The bush has little or no commercial value. I understand the company is about to extend its operations to Callaghan's, on the main Hokitika-Kumara Road.

Pakihi Lands.—The problem of dealing with these lands still remains unsolved. An attempt to bring a section of pakihi lands into profitable occupation has been brought under the notice of the Department this year, but the cost of bringing the land into profit, and the time occupied in the undertaking, would appear to constitute an insuperable barrier, under present conditions, to the successful occupation of this class of land.

Land open for Selection.—There has been little demand for land during the year. An area of 4,579 acres was opened by ballot in fifteen sections on renewable lease and regulation license, but only three sections were taken up. In addition to this, 3,013 acres were selected on various tenures, exclusive of miscellaneous licenses.

Land Board Work.—Twelve monthly meetings were held during the year as scheduled, occupying one full day each, with an additional day included to discuss the Soldiers' Board of Inquiry report. In all ninety-four applications for land, 117 transfers, and sixty-three applications by discharged soldiers for transfers, postponements, &c., were dealt with, in addition to a large volume of miscellaneous work.

Freehold.—An area of 1,010 acres, comprising 113 acres of isolated areas and 897 acres of Crown lease, was purchased during the year, making the total area of freehold 156,708 acres.

Revenue and Arrears.—The total gross revenue from all sources (including Discharged Soldiers Settlement Account) during the year amounted to £28,561, the rent roll being £9,654 and the arrears of rent £1,165, the latter being an increase over last year of £436. A good portion of these arrears is due by discharged soldiers, whilst the general depression of prices of the previous year threw many settlers in arrear, from which they have not yet recovered. Every effort is being made to reduce the amounts still outstanding.

Land remaining for Selection.—There are two areas of Crown land in bush which have been sectionized with a view to disposal. The quality of the land is generally poor, but as soon as milling-rights now current are expired the land will probably be opened for disposal on renewable-lease tenures. At Harihari an area of 720 acres of swamp land is now being reclaimed under the direction of the Chief Drainage Engineer. The work has not long been started, but when completed the land, which will no doubt be of very high quality, will be available for disposal. The intention is to subdivide it into dairy farms.

CANTERBURY.

(G. H. BULLARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—During the past winter the district experienced a very long succession of heavy frosts. Outside of these weather conditions were generally fine, so that stock losses were not large, but in parts of the back country the severe frosts and late spring resulted in low lambing percentages. In the southern part of the district, for seven months from April, 1922, the rainfall was under 5 in., and consequently the germination of cereal crops was hindered. In November about 3 in. of rain fell, and December and January were exceptionally wet, and the cutting of crops was in many parts hindered and the quality of grain affected. In mid-Canterbury the rainfall also interfered considerably with the harvesting, and where wheat was threshed from stook there is a considerable proportion of damaged grain. Generally speaking, more grain has been stacked and less has been threshed from the stook. In most cases yields are said to have been better than in last year, and this will to some extent make up for the lesser area under crop. Some land is suffering from overcropping in past years, and farmers are learning by experience that in the long-run it pays to farm on a proper system of rotation, including the sowing of leguminous crops encouraged by liming where conditions suit. In North Canterbury the rainfall seems to have been more evenly distributed. In some of the drier parts of the district the season has suited the pastures, and there was plenty of grass, but unfortunately many of our soldier settlers are without sheep, having sold last year to use their land for cropping, and, owing to the high prices ruling at one time for store stock, hesitated to purchase, and as a result have feed wasting. On some of the lighter lands the