

season has suited the oat crops and fair results have been obtained, both from the first feeding off and subsequent cropping. Stock in the lower lands have done fairly well, but owing to the general failure of turnip crops some apprehension is felt about a possibility of the shortage of other feed for the coming winter. In some cases stock did not fatten well on the rape, which was too sappy from the extra rainfall. A larger number of lambs than usual were sold fat from the mothers. In the run country, in parts such as the Mackenzie County, lambing percentages are said to have been lower than usual, but other losses have been lighter. A sale of surplus stock was held at Tekapo, and very good prices realized. Runholders have benefited by the good prices for the finer wools, and this has helped many to materially better their financial position. Too large a proportion of the runs are suffering from the inroads of the rabbit pest, and the natural pastures are deteriorating in consequence, the sheep-carrying capacity being lowered. Any extension of leases should be utilized by holders to regenerate their country by lighter stocking, surface-sowing where practicable, and by checking the rabbit pest; and observation leads me to believe that more rabbit-proof fences are required. It is also evident that it is unwise in the high country to carry subdivision into smaller properties very far. In the lower sheep-country the excellent prices for lambs and mutton have come as a great boon to sheep-farmers, and the effect is noticeable in our revenue. Dairy-farmers have experienced a good season, but all the same, some men who purchased land, both agricultural and sheep land, at excessive boom prices have been forced to quit their properties. Cattle still continue low in price, excepting very prime stuff for local consumption. Orchardists are obtaining good yields of apples, but prices are not good. Large quantities of stone-fruits were spoiled by rain and blights. Poultry-farmers state they have not been able to sell eggs at remunerative prices, but it is hoped that the proper organization of an export trade will benefit them in the future.

Land Board Work.—The usual monthly meetings have been held, and owing to the volume of work dealt with every sitting has occupied three days. During the year the term of office of the Crown tenants' representative, Mr. D. Stowell, expired by effluxion of time, and he was subsequently returned unopposed. As Chairman of the Board I must again acknowledge my indebtedness to every member for his valued assistance in dealing with a multiplicity of subjects that occupy the attention of a modern Land Board.

Revenue.—It is pleasing to record an increase of £72,742 over the revenue of twelve months ago, which is a reflex of the general prosperity of the district arising from the improved prices for our staple products. There is every reason to suppose that next year's revenue will be even more buoyant, as the better returns and prices are still too recent to show to fullest advantage to the man on the land, who requires time to make financial adjustments with trading firms, &c., as the outcome of better prices received. Under the improved conditions prevailing it is only reasonable to expect the clearing altogether, or a very considerable reduction, in rental arrears and current postponements as soon as tenants are financially adjusted and feel the full benefit of higher prices.

Lands made available during the Year.—A total area of 54,242 acres, comprising sixty-two sections, was made available during the year, as follows:—

Nine lots, comprising 51 acres, for sale at auction; thirty-two lots, 2,414 acres, for leasing at auction; sixteen sections, 467 acres, for purely soldier selection; two sections, 51,300 acres, for general application. There has been little demand for new selections during the year, chiefly owing to the unsettled state of the markets, and the scarcity of necessary finance for developmental purposes, and the high cost of essentials.

OTAGO.

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

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—Very little new settlement has taken place in Otago during the past year, as no estates have been acquired for subdivision and no subdivisions of runs have been offered. Fortunately, the rise in the price of wool, especially fine wool, has been maintained, and the price of the coarse wools has increased to some extent. Good prices have been realized for fat lambs and sheep, and the prospects for sheep-farmers are good. The price of cattle has not risen, and now that there is no prospect of a profitable export trade the demand for beef must be limited to local requirements. The price of butterfat has not risen as anticipated, and the dairy-farmers generally have not had much chance to improve their position.

The spring and early summer of 1922 were dry and cold; as a result, both crops and grass were very backward during the earlier part of the year. Later, with good rains the grass and crops grew abundantly, and stock were all in good condition. North Otago has had plentiful rains, which, though favourable to the growth of straw and grass, did not produce a good yield of grain; in parts of south Otago and Taieri harvesting operations were very late, and much delayed owing to bad weather. The rape and turnip crops are good in all parts of Otago, and with the good growth of grass there should be abundance of winter feed.

The fruit-farmers have not had a good time with their soft fruits owing to the heavy supplies glutting the market. Until provision is made for dealing with stone-fruits, either by drying or making into preserves on a large scale, this class of fruit is not profitable. The apple crop promises well, but payable export trade must be established for this product, otherwise it may be another case of overproduction. Large shipments are being made this season, and from the Ripponvale Orchards alone 3,400 cases, weighing 640 tons, have already been forwarded for shipment by the "Runanga," and it is proposed to export from this locality 8,000 cases in all. A first consignment from Teviot and Ettrick, of 3,900 cases, has been shipped by the "Ruabine," and more will be sent later on. Owing to the heavy charges for freight, &c., it is necessary for this fruit to arrive in good condition and realize the highest prices, otherwise it does not prove payable.

Lucerne-growing is receiving a considerable amount of support on the irrigated lands of Central Otago and elsewhere.

Some of the bush farmers have had a good deal of trouble in their herds with mammitis, and in consequence have not done very well, and also the season has been too wet to get the best results.