

Another of the establishments carried on by the Government is the Hermitage at Mount Cook, which is much resorted to by tourists in order to visit the glaciers and the fine alpine scenery for which this district is celebrated. With the two huts—the Ball hut and the Broderick hut—situated right on the glaciers, there is now no difficulty in viewing the remarkably fine mountain scenery of this part, which is not equalled in Australasia. From these huts, with the comfortable hostelry at the Hermitage as a base, alpine climbers can now get ready access to many peaks, some rising over 10,000 ft. above the sea. The services of an experienced alpine guide may be obtained at the Hermitage for excursions on to the mountains, and horses also for those who prefer riding part of the way. It is hoped that a contemplated alteration in the main road from Fairlie Railway-station to the Hermitage will allow of a one-day coach service between those places, instead of two as at present.

CHEVIOT ESTATE.

This estate continues to progress satisfactorily, as will be seen from the Commissioner's report attached. It is now six years since the estate was taken over, and it is interesting to note that whilst the value of improvements required by law is £46,590, those actually made by the 222 holders amount to £63,274, twenty of the selectors being somewhat in arrear under this head.

The following figures, in the same form as those of previous years, show the state of the Cheviot Account:—

CHEVIOT ESTATE: RETURN of OUTLAY and INCOME, 31st March, 1900.

<i>Outlay.</i>						£
Balance from previous year	..	..	..	..	..	254,724
Administration and contingencies	..	..	..	..	..	51
Interest chargeable to 31st March, 1900	..	..	..	..	..	8,866
Rents accrued, included in last year's account	..	..	..	..	..	4,155
						<u>£267,796</u>
<i>Income.</i>						
Cash—Instalments of purchase-money of freeholds	..	..	..	..	..	389
Rents and royalties	..	..	..	..	..	14,411
Interest	..	..	..	..	..	23
Rents and interest accrued to 31st March, 1900	..	..	..	..	..	4,093
Balance, forward	..	..	..	..	..	248,880
						<u>£267,796</u>

The arrears of rents, &c., on the 31st March amounted to £218 12s. 4d., due by thirty-three settlers.

The payments on account of conditional freehold purchases within the estate have ceased, so that a less return appears for this year, and, of course, this will be the same in following years.

LAND FOR SETTLEMENT.

The number of estates purchased through the Land-purchase Board and handed over to this department for disposal is somewhat in excess of that for last year, though the total area is less. Some of these estates are, however, of considerable size—nine of them covered an area of 45,059 acres. Besides the above, four sections, of an area of 318 acres, acquired under a certain section of the Act as homestead-sites for pastoral country, were also leased.

The particulars as to these estates are furnished below, and in the Appendix will be found the details of all the estates acquired since the Act came into force.

ESTATES OFFERED FOR SELECTION DURING THE YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH, 1900.

Land District, and Name of Estate.	Area of Estate.	Number of Selectors.	Number of original Applications.	Area unselected, 31st March, 1900.	Annual Rental payable on Lands leased.	Date when offered for Selection.
	A. R. P.			A. R. P.	£ s. d.	
Auckland—						
Fencourt ..	7,105 3 5	25	24	2,471 1 22	1,142 7 10	12 March, 1900.
Wellington—						
Ohakea ..	1,745 1 30	12	25	363 3 9	898 11 6	27 Dec., 1899.
Te Matua ..	702 0 19	13	17	Nil	527 7 4	27 Dec., 1899.
Marlborough—						
Richmond Brook	5,854 0 0	11	40	Nil	1,313 13 4	18 Aug., 1899.
Canterbury—						
Tamai ..	41 0 28	30	15	7 0 0	191 0 4	26 June, 1899.
Takitu ..	9,713 0 37	4	17	1,494 0 0	931 10 4	1 March, 1900.
Pareora No. 2	8,132 0 31	31	220	484 0 37	3,495 10 0	22 March, 1900.
Four homesteads	318 1 12	4	4	Nil	70 0 2	
Otago—						
Janefield ..	147 0 2	20	31	12 0 0	256 9 0	15 Sept., 1899.
Elderslie ..	11,618 2 4	24	50	3,501 0 11	2,981 12 4	30 March, 1900.
Totals ..	45,377 3 8	174	443	8,333 1 39	11,808 2 2	

The area unselected on the 31st March seems large, but it has been considerably reduced since that date, and some portion was kept back purposely. A very unfortunate fire destroyed the grass and the surface of some reclaimed land on the Fencourt Estate just before the day of selection, and this has prevented any one taking up that part hitherto.