

Land under the Land for Settlements Act.

Merrivale Estate.—The settlers on this estate continue to progress steadily and satisfactorily, and a gratifying state of prosperity is showing as the result of the year's work. All the sections available for permanent settlement—forty-six in number—are now held on lease in perpetuity. Of an equal number of settlers, thirty-five are residing on their sections and ten are living adjoining. The remaining one has not yet held his section for a year, so that in his case personal residence is not required at present. The area in crop this year is not so large as formerly, the distance from the nearest railway-station, and the expense and loss of time involved in carting thereto, making cropping perhaps less lucrative than stock-raising, and it is to this kind of farming settlers are beginning to turn their attention. There is thus little fear that any of the sections will become overcropped. The conditions of the Act and regulations are being well complied with. Given good seasons there is no reason why this estate should not continue to progress in the same satisfactory way as hitherto. Improvements totalling a value of £7,727 have been effected up to the present. This means an average of nearly £170 per settler, which, considering that some of the sections are small and that others have but recently been acquired, must be considered highly satisfactory. The sum of £1,495 16s. 9d. has been paid during the year, and this brings the total amount received from inception to £6,051 6s. 4d.

Otahu Estate.—One selection has been made during the year, the area being 1,292 acres 2 roods 1 perch, and the annual rental £48 9s. 8d. The total area now held is 4,899 acres, and the area unlet 1,125 acres. Only 70 acres of the unlet area is, however, in the market at present. When the remaining 1,055 acres are opened to selection, I confidently anticipate that they will be readily taken up. This anticipation is based on the fact that numerous inquiries have been made as to the probable date of application. One holding has been forfeited during the year. The forfeiture was attributable to the fact that the lessee had placed his sons on the holding, and these were quite inexperienced in the methods of farming. The grass all over the estate is very good. The improvements effected since settlement commenced on this estate are valued at £501 10s.

Beaumont Estate.—Two selections have been made on this estate during the year, the area being 584 acres 2 roods 1 perch, and the annual rental £83 7s. 4d. As, however, two holdings were forfeited during the year, the number of settlers remains the same as last year—viz., six. Of this number, four are residing on their holdings and the remaining two are living adjoining. All the settlers are complying with the provisions of the Acts and regulations. Improvements to the value of £839 have been effected up to the present, and this, I think, must be considered fairly satisfactory.

D. BARRON,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.