

LAND PROPOSED TO BE OPENED FOR SELECTION DURING 1909-10.

Early in the year a block of land, west of the Waiau River, recently surveyed, will be opened under the optional system. This block contains some 9,400 acres, and is subdivided into sections of from 200 to 400 acres. It is all bush-clad, with a considerable sprinkling of milling timber on it. The question of the disposal of this timber has engaged the attention of the Land Board for some time, and I am confident that the result will be satisfactory to intending selectors, in that they will not be harassed by having to pay down large amounts for the timber, while at the same time the Government's interest therein will be duly conserved. I expect there will be a brisk competition for sections in this block. I propose to cut up a block of 4,000 acres near Otautau and another of 2,000 acres on the west bank of the Waiau. The first consists of bush country through which the mills have worked; the other is covered with bush containing a large proportion of good milling timber. Both blocks should be readily taken up. Of land already open, in the Land Guide there is 26,085 acres, but most of this is of poor quality, and in many cases difficult of access.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The progress of the district has been, as in the last few years, very satisfactory. The Crown tenants are doing good work in improving their holdings and making homes for themselves, and are acting generally well up to the conditions of their leases. Stimulated by the pushing-on of the railway to Tuatapere, the settlers in the western district have made marked progress, which will doubtless be more marked when the land on the western side of the Waiau is thrown open. The good work done by the drain-plough is evidenced by the bringing into cultivation of more and more of the sour and swampy lands.

At present, owing to the tightness of money and the low prices of stock and produce, there is a little depression; but I feel confident that the outlook is good, and that Southland will ere long prove to be one of the finest agricultural districts in the Dominion.

DEPARTMENTAL.

As must be expected, owing to the increase in the number of Crown tenants, the clerical work is steadily increasing. The fact that outward correspondence in the way of letters, telegrams, and notices comprised 9,310 items, and that 3,442 posters were distributed, will give some idea of the volume of correspondence. A considerable amount of extra work was entailed in the preparation of a large number of warrants in connection with Native lands. I take this opportunity of recording my appreciation of the willing and conscientious manner in which the various members of the staff have discharged their duties.

E. H. WILMOT,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

APPENDIX II.—LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS (EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS ON).

AUCKLAND.

It was in the year 1896 that the first estate purchased under the provisions of the Land for Settlements Act in this district was offered for selection. It is known as the Opouriao Settlement, and is situated in the Bay of Plenty district. The success which has been achieved by the selectors there has exceeded that of any other settlement offered under this Act.

Since Opouriao was acquired, further purchases, to the number of twenty, were made in various parts of the land district. Of the estates so obtained there are practically three classes. Opouriao and thirteen others consist of large areas of rural land, most of which is suitable for agricultural purposes. The Opouriao, Fencourt, and Matamata Settlements stand out prominently as the most successful. Other settlements have been successful, but have not reached the high standard attained by the three mentioned. The Okauia Settlement, which is seven miles from Matamata, and was settled in 1898, has been in the past consistently the least prosperous. This was apparently due, in a great measure, to the fact that the wrong class of settler secured the sections. There were single men who lived a nomadic life, and there were men who had no practical experience in farming. Both factors operated against success, as the lands were neglected, and what work was done was not carried out in a husbandlike manner. This year, for the first time, it is satisfactory to be able to report that the settlement has assumed a new aspect. Several sections have changed hands, and the introduction of new settlers has resulted in a considerable increase in the output and a corresponding improvement in the appearance of the place.

The more modern settlements are Selwyn, Mangapouri, Mangawhero, Waimana, Tautari, and Rewi. They are all too recently settled to compare their operations with previous years, but individual comparisons may be made. Waimana, Mangapouri, and Mangawhero all promise well. Of these, Waimana, with its present indications, coupled with the facts that it is situated in the same district as the Opouriao Settlement and that considerable discrimination was made in allotting sections, should attain the greatest success. Very optimistic opinions are also held as to the ultimate prosperity of the other two settlements referred to. In the case of Selwyn, Tautari, and Rewi, opinions differ, and it is doubtful what the results will be. Selwyn is the