

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS ON SETTLEMENT OPERATIONS DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS WHICH ENDED ON THE 31ST MARCH, 1909.

AUCKLAND.

THE SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

In reviewing the statistics of the Department so far as they relate to its operations during a period of twelve months, it is interesting to compare the figures with those of the corresponding previous period. It will be noticed that there is a difference of five only in the number of selectors who have been allotted sections, compared with the number that were selectors during the previous twelve months. The area disposed of is, however, less by 20,000 acres than it was in the former year. In the interests of closer settlement it is satisfactory to know that whereas 444 selectors took up 126,523 acres last year, this year a total of 439 divided 106,320 acres between them. There is also another item in the comparison which should be noted, and that is the increase in the gross revenue of the district. In the previous twelve months the total sum amounted to £109,836, and the total this year comes to £124,476, being an increase of £14,640. Therefore, so far as the transactions of the Department for this year are concerned, if there is any tightness in the money-market it has not materially affected the revenue derived from the operations in this district.

CONDITIONS AND PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENT.

There is no doubt that the conditions and progress of settlement depend very largely on the state of the road access. To those unaccustomed to the difficulties which attend the pursuits of a pioneer settler, it is a matter of the greatest surprise that so much is accomplished in the face of the hardships endured by those who go into the backblocks. Collateral with the pushing-on of roadworks is the progress of the settler, and in districts where horse-roads have been widened out for wheel traffic the whole face of the country is being changed; bush land is giving place to grass, and tents and rough huts to comfortable cottages. There is another feature which marks the demand for land and the progress of settlement in this district, and that is the attention being paid to the development of what is known as the poor lands of the far north. In travelling through that district it is a matter for comment that many of the settlers are men who have lived for many years in the southern latitudes of the Dominion. Much of the land has remained unoccupied, neglected, and unappreciated by those whose homes were in the vicinity or whose business brought them into the locality. It is probable that the scarcity of land in other parts has directed attention to the district referred to, but, be the reason what it may, settlers from the south are acquiring the lands, and are astonished that they should have been so long despised as unsuitable for settlement.

RANGERS' REPORTS.

The amount of miscellaneous work required of Crown Lands Rangers has been commented on in previous reports, and this year the enormous volume may be gauged when it is seen that the number of miscellaneous inspections made by Rangers covered not less than 266,860 acres. The total number of inspections of all kinds was less than the number made in the previous year, but this is counterbalanced by the fact that, although a less number of individual inspections were made, the area covered in these inspections exceeded that of the former year by 117,155 acres. The statutory inspections continue to show that in *bonâ fide* settlement the selectors effect improvements far in excess of the value which the law demands. It is also an encouraging sign that, whereas there were 527 defaulters during the previous year, this year the number did not exceed 395.

GENERAL.

From personal observation in the localities I have visited, and from the information I have received from officers who have to travel all over this land district, I am convinced that, notwithstanding the difficulties attending pioneer settlement, the selectors as a whole are more than holding their own. Owing to the progress that has been made in opening bridle tracks and widening existing tracks into cart-roads, and the gradual linking-up of the roads, the few settlers who are behind with their improvements and not residing will no doubt now be able to fulfil their conditions. The great climatic variations common to so large a district have a corresponding effect upon the nature of the operations of the settlers. In the north fruit-growing and viticulture are established industries increasing in importance from year to year. The gum-lands have also become increasingly appreciated as a valuable asset, and one which has yet to be further developed. The gum-diggers are very anxious to have the industry recognised at its full import-