

tionary Force, shall at any ballot be entitled to the same preference as that accorded to married men who have families dependent on them or single men who have been twice unsuccessful at a ballot.

Discharged soldiers applying for land under this Act do not get the special advantages provided for in the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

#### SELECTION OF LAND FOR DISCHARGED SOLDIERS.

Having decided on the advisability of encouraging soldiers to settle on the land, it became necessary to select the land suitable for their settlement and to get it ready for allotting to them. The Commissioners of Crown Lands were instructed to supply returns giving a list of all the lands suitable in their districts for occupation by discharged soldiers, and it was ascertained that there are in the Dominion a total of about 500,000 acres of land more or less suitable. This land has been provisionally set apart for discharged soldiers, but in most cases before it can be got ready for settlement road and subdivision surveys and plans of the land are required to be made: these works, however, are being proceeded with as fast as possible. Of the 500,000 acres of land provisionally set apart up to the end of March, 67,855 acres have formally been proclaimed under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915.

#### PREPARING FARMS.

It has been decided to cut up some blocks of land into suitable sections, and, before finally settling soldiers on them, to effect such improvements as will enable selectors to make a living off their sections. As far as possible soldiers will be employed in effecting these improvements.

#### FRUIT-FARMING.

In connection with the settlement of discharged soldiers on the land it was thought that there would be some who would prefer fruit-farming to the more strenuous life entailed by other forms of farming, but as fruit-farming is a business that one needs considerable experience in before starting, and also as it takes some years before an orchard becomes profitable, it has been decided to plant certain areas in fruit-trees, particularly apples.

The fruit industry is increasing with very rapid strides, and it can confidently be expected that a man with ordinary intelligence and industry can make a comfortable living from this occupation.

#### ASSISTANCE IN HAWKE'S BAY.

It is understood that a large sum has been set aside by the Hawke's Bay War Relief Association to assist the discharged soldiers in working their holdings, and at a recent conference of the sub-committee of the association with the Hawke's Bay Land Board it was agreed to work together in the matter of advancing money.

#### CONCLUSION.

Appendix A attached to this report shows the total area of lands in the Dominion that had up to the end of March been proclaimed under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915. The whole of the area has not yet been subdivided, but there are a total of 130 sections in the subdivided areas. It will be noticed that all the areas are proclaimed under section 4 of the Act—i.e., "special tenures."

Appendix B shows the number of soldiers to whom land has already been allotted in each land district. At present this number is small, but there were a number of applications under consideration on the 31st March last, and from now onwards, as the benefits of the Act become known, it is expected that a large number of soldiers will apply and be placed on the land to the mutual advantage of themselves and the State. This appendix also shows that up to the 31st March, 1916, no moneys had been spent in assisting settlers under the Act.

Appendix C is a statement of areas which, although subdivided for settlement, were not proclaimed on the 31st March, and could not therefore be included in Appendix A.

In conclusion, it may not be out of place here to remark that Land Boards have been encouraged to deal most leniently with members of the Expeditionary Force and discharged soldiers, and to assist them in every legitimate manner. That they are taking advantage of this attitude of the Government is evidenced by the number of privileges granted and by many postponements and exemptions from rent.