

their ordeals. Failures there undoubtedly will be, but they may generally be ascribed to the unsuitability, from various causes, of the settlers, and only rigid unsentimental examination and selection of applicants will tend to minimize the evil.

Grazing-lands in this district attract most attention, and those of a high carrying-capacity and a capital value in conformity have been eagerly sought after—in a great many instances by those who did not or would not recognize that in such cases the land was entitled to as much consideration as the prospective tenant.

It is becoming very noticeable that nearly all applications are now from men who have in some manner been closely connected with agricultural or pastoral pursuits, and who fully realize that patience, labour, and industry, in conjunction with a financial standing, are indispensable factors in the making of a successful settler.

#### TARANAKI.

(G. H. BULLARD, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the year the activities of the staff have been largely occupied in dealing with inquiries and applications from intending soldier selectors, the establishment and oversight of soldiers already on land, and the making of advances for stock, buildings, and improvements for the development of holdings. In this district there are returned men placed on three different classes of land—namely, small dairy farms, mixed farms, and unimproved bush lands—most of whom it may be claimed are still on their trial, but who, with the usual exceptions, give promise of making good settlers.

Present indications are that mixed farming in this district under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Acts is hardly likely to be so successful as either dairying or grazing; but in the end the type of the soldier selector himself, his experience, energy, and adaptability, must always be a strong factor in the ultimate success or otherwise under any of the classes of farming referred to. Under section 108 of the Land Act, 1908, which is applicable to soldier selectors, the Land Board is empowered, before taking a ballot, to “inquire into all matters affecting an applicant’s suitability or his right of preference”; and it is evident from past experience that the Board will have to exercise that power more rigidly, as much in the interests of the would-be selector as for the welfare of the State. There is sometimes a tendency, especially on the part of those applicants lacking farming experience, to regard the acquisition of a section much in the way of an independence or as an end in itself, and so “rest on their oars,” with a minimum of exertion and apparently little incentive, with the State assistance by way of advances, to carve out the future for themselves. This, happily, is not generally the case, but, as the tendency is in evidence, the only way to combat it will be for Land Boards to exercise their discretionary powers to the full in the matter of giving preference in ballots.

The 1917 amendment of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act has enlarged the scope of soldier settlement in no small degree, and the assistance now afforded by the State under sections 2, 3, and 4 of that Act in the way of financing soldiers to take over particular Crown leases, private or Native lands, secure workers’ dwellings, &c., is now claiming the attention of the men more and more, as evidenced by the large number of inquiries and applications dealt with by the office month by month since the Act came into force. This newer method of placing men on land chosen by themselves will in some respects be quicker in its operation than under the older method, where the Crown first acquires a block, then subdivides, advertises ballots, &c., under the Land for Settlements Act; and at the same time selection in this manner will relieve ballots of a large number of applicants who would otherwise have been competing under the latter system of selection.

#### WELLINGTON.

(G. H. M. McCLURE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Five estates, aggregating an area of 2,673 acres, were acquired during the year. These were subdivided into thirty-eight allotments, principally dairy farms, and all were selected. In addition, twenty-two allotments in estates purchased in the previous year were selected, comprising an area of 7,314 acres. To this may be added thirty allotments of ordinary Crown lands which were selected, comprising an area of 15,860 acres, making a total for the year of ninety allotments, aggregating 25,847 acres. Six allotments, comprising an area of 5,233 acres, were surrendered and not reselected during the year; and the applications for eight allotments, of an area of 3,008 acres, were not completed by payment of half-year’s rent. At the close of the year there were no dairy lands available for selection, the only lands open being 24,515 acres grazing country covered with forest, and 1,240 acres open land, principally improved sheep-country. The provisional applications lodged during the year numbered 500. By forfeiture and surrender for various reasons thirty-two holdings, aggregating an area of 13,134 acres, reverted to the Crown, but during the year twenty-three persons reselected 6,692 acres of that area, the remainder being practically all bush country.

Of the 199 selectors shown in the table as holding allotments, sixty-four are dairying and sixty-seven are grazing sheep and cattle. During the coming season another eighteen will be dairying, and possibly twenty-five will be added to those using their holdings for grazing. One small holding near the Lower Hutt is used for market-gardening, and the remaining twenty-four are practically all bush lands in the early stages of improvement. An area of 1,715 acres was felled, and grass-seed supplied by the Department for sowing that area. It is considered that probably 13 per cent. of the selectors in actual occupation will not make a success of their holdings, owing altogether to their inability to recognize the fact that it is absolutely necessary, if they wish to succeed, to devote the whole of their time and energies to the work of their farms. These essentials were pointed out in my previous report, and cannot be too strongly impressed upon the soldier who wishes to take up farming pursuits for a livelihood.