

Most of those settlers supplying milk to the factories have now surmounted the initial expenses and difficulties, and, provided they devote their whole time and energy to effecting improvements, next season should see them well established on their holdings. The dry summer seriously affected their returns. In one settlement (Putorino), which was only allotted as the season was about to commence, a temporary water-supply was put in which afforded relief, but not before it became necessary for some of the settlers to arrange with neighbouring farmers for their stock to be depastured on their farms. A very creditable amount of improvements was effected on this settlement during the first eight months of occupation.

Experience has shown that this class of farm must be stocked to its full carrying-capacity, and after effecting necessary improvements the advance of £500 in most instances is found to be inadequate to purchase the additional stock required so as to get the best results out of the farm.

Those selectors whose farms are used for pastoral purposes have been well stocked up with sheep and cattle, and they have all made steady progress, though the high rates ruling for labour and materials have prevented them from effecting more than the most urgent improvements. They are making the best possible use of their holdings, and once the expenses of the first year or two are over and the farms are in working-order it is confidently expected that the settlers will succeed in making a comfortable living.

#### NELSON.

(F. A. THOMPSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Under the powers provided in the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1915, a fair amount of land in the Nelson Land District has been set aside for selection exclusively by returned soldiers.

An area of 2,892 acres, comprising ten holdings, is available for selection on the special tenures provided in the Act quoted, and an area of 10,170 acres, comprising twenty holdings, is available for selection on renewable lease, these latter lands being either in mining districts or within the national endowment.

The number of discharged soldiers who have selected land on all tenures in this district is fifteen, and the area held by them is 16,623 acres. No settlements have been purchased for returned soldiers here, and the lands which are now held are isolated sections which for the most part were picked out by the men themselves.

Our soldier tenants appear to be good settlers, and with some financial assistance, and in some cases better access, should in a few years make comfortable livings.

It must be noted that the lands available for soldiers are, generally speaking, bush lands that require a good deal of development, and these do not appeal to men who have returned from the front wounded or with health undermined by disease. These areas will, however, probably be readily selected when the men return home at the conclusion of the war.

#### MARLBOROUGH.

(H. D. McKELLAR, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Since the passing of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act 8,682 acres have been opened for selection, comprising twenty-eight sections, from 7 to 760 acres in area.

On the Wither Settlement, out of the twelve small sections suitable for fruitgrowing or market-gardening, four have been taken up, but so far do not show any marked success.

On Brina Settlement, which is pastoral land, seven sections are now selected, leaving five yet available. With one exception these selectors are doing good work, and should make satisfactory settlers. One selector has re-enlisted and returned to the front, having made arrangements for the working of his section. The demand for this land is not yet pressing, though there are many inquiries which do not result in applications.

#### WESTLAND.

(THOMAS BROOK, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the year areas aggregating 7,717 acres were opened for selection by discharged soldiers, and five sections, of a total area of 2,114 acres, were selected. Two of the settlers are making good progress, but the other three have not yet entered into possession of their holdings.

The number of inquiries is increasing, but intending selectors show a preference for land which will give a quicker return than the heavy-bush country we have to offer.

#### CANTERBURY.

(W. H. SKINNER, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

On the 31st March, 1917, an area of 38,003 acres had been allotted to fifteen returned soldiers, and at the close of the present year further allotments had been made to thirty-seven, containing a total area of 57,467 acres.

The larger proportion of this land is pastoral country, for which the soldiers in the Canterbury District show a decided preference. The remainder comprises country suitable for mixed farming; only a very limited area was available for dairying, and few inquiries were made for this class of land.

Taken as a whole, a good class of settler has made these selections, and so far their work and progress have been satisfactory. With ordinary precautions and energy this could scarcely be otherwise, in view of the favourable weather conditions that have prevailed in this district since the soldier settlements were initiated. Particularly has this been so in the cases of those selectors who have taken up pastoral lands. The real test for these settlers will arise if they are overtaken by one or two bad seasons before they are well established, but this is all in the game, and so far fortune has smiled upon them.