

acquire rural holdings, 3,326 who had been assisted to improve their farms, erect houses thereon, or purchase machinery and stock, and 9,196 who had been assisted to acquire residential properties or erect houses in towns. By the 31st May last the figures had increased, and were as follows —

	Number.	Acres.
(a.) Settled on Crown properties	3,638	1,946,475
(b.) Private lands acquired by soldiers with Government advances	5,403	1,227,092
Total number settled on rural land	9,041	3,173,567
(c.) Assisted to purchase or erect town dwellings	9,921	
Total repatriated by Lands Department	18,962	

At the same time, under the provisions of the Repatriation Act, 5,646 returned soldiers had been financed to assist them to establish businesses; 11,980 had obtained loans to purchase household furniture, tools of trade, &c., and 2,559 had been granted transportation to assist them in securing work. Quite outside all this it may be mentioned that some 8,000 ex-soldiers are employed in different capacities by the State including the Railway, Postal, and Telegraph Departments, and the general branches of the Public Service, as well as teachers in State schools. All the foregoing groups comprise a gross total of 47,000.

It must not be overlooked, however, that some of the soldiers settled on the land or in residential properties were also assisted to purchase furniture by the Repatriation Department, whilst some public servants secured advances to purchase or erect houses and therefore appear more than once in the figures quoted; but it is safe to assume that at least 43,000 soldiers have been assisted, whilst the report of the Repatriation Department shows that an additional 31,000 ex-soldiers had been aided in various other directions to obtain employment.

The total number of troops and nurses provided by New Zealand for foreign service was 110,368, whilst 9,924 were in training at the time of the Armistice, and 3,370 are known to have left this Dominion to serve in British and Australian Forces, or a total of about 124,000. Of these, 16,781 were killed or died, and some 3,000 were in hospital last year, so that probably 100,000 have been eligible to apply for the benefits of the Acts. Roughly speaking, therefore, it would appear that about 43 per cent. of the Expeditionary Force have been assisted by the Government to establish themselves on the land or to start in business, or else are in the service of the State, whilst another 31 per cent. have been aided in a minor degree.

The unfortunate drop in the prices of wool and frozen meat, and the difficulty of disposing of same in the Home market, caused a widespread depression in the farming community of New Zealand, and adversely affected many soldier settlers who were just beginning to make their farms pay. Fortunately a large proportion of soldier settlers are dairy-farmers, and were consequently not so much affected as those who depended on the pastoral industry, but an unusual number of postponements of rent were necessitated, and the most sympathetic consideration has been given by the Government to the recommendations of the various Land Boards to whom the individual settlers have applied for concessions. It is, however, a subject of regret that in some cases the settlers do not appear to have shown the necessary spirit of self-reliance and energy that should, and does to a large measure, characterize the settlers of this Dominion, and have applied for concessions or manifested a reluctance to pay interest on advances or rent on their holdings when sufficient justification therefor does not seem to have existed. Such conduct is detrimental to ultimate success, and tends to weaken a man's moral fibre and power to overcome the periodical difficulties and hardships that are met with in every branch of life. When making these remarks, which, as stated, only apply to a comparatively small portion of the Crown's soldier settlers, it is pleasing to be able to add that a large number evince no desire to shirk their responsibilities and just claims, but by hard work, perseverance, and every endeavour to utilize their land to the best advantage, manage to pay their way and steadily improve their position, whilst other settlers under similar circumstances apply for remission and postponement of rent. All the more credit attaches to the bulk of our settlers, who face the ups and downs of a farmer's life with courage and self-reliance, and add so greatly to the productivity and good name of this Dominion.

REALLOTMENT OF FORFEITED HOLDINGS.

A certain number of soldier settlers fail to meet their obligations and either abandon their farms or have their leases forfeited. When it happens that the selector relinquishes the holding allotted to him, on which advances have been made under the Act, it is necessary to place a new tenant in possession as soon as possible, in order that the buildings and improvements may not deteriorate, that returns may be obtained from the holdings, and that accruing rent and interest on advances may be duly met. It is sometimes the case that an eligible discharged soldier cannot be found to take over his predecessor's liabilities, although a civilian may be willing and able to take the property, and would probably "make good" if permitted to do so. This is prohibited by the terms of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act and mortgage thereunder; but, as it is of primary importance that all land should be kept in a productive condition and that the Crown's advances should be protected, it is in contemplation to amend the Act so as to provide that when land subject to the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act has reverted to the Crown, it may be disposed of to a suitable applicant in the open market, subject to the mortgage at an increased rate of interest, when it is impracticable to obtain a discharged soldier for that purpose. Every care would, however, be taken to dispose of the land under