

EXTRACTS FROM REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS.

NORTH AUCKLAND.

(R. P. GREVILLE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

THE only settlements opened for selection during the past year were the Koremoa, Puni, and Waari Settlements. These were opened for discharged soldiers only, and will be referred to under the report "Discharged Soldier Settlement." The old-established Bickerstaffe and Parahi Settlements continue to progress, and settlers thereon are now in a very satisfactory position.

AUCKLAND.

(H. M. SKERT, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The new settlements opened during the year having been offered exclusively under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, they will be dealt with in the report under that Act.

There are now in all forty-nine settlements in existence under this Act in the district, comprising a total area of 346,748 acres, of which 125,262 acres is occupied by 860 tenants, 114,260 acres has been acquired in freehold by 553 purchasers, and 100,052 acres is still available for disposal.

All the older settlements are in a well-established and prosperous condition; the occupiers are principally engaged in dairying, and they comprise some of the best dairying-lands in the district.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(W. F. MARSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

There are now forty-seven settlements established in this district, of which nineteen are held under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Acts. The twelve new estates opened during the year, aggregating 51,356 acres, and comprising 133 holdings, were dealt with under soldier-settlement conditions, and are referred to in the report under that heading.

The old-established settlements dating back to 1896 have, on the whole, experienced a prosperous year, notwithstanding some setbacks, the outcome of a dry autumn and summer and consequent shortage of feed, with declining prices of stock. The statutory inspection by the Crown Lands Rangers of 167 land-for-settlement holdings, comprising 34,530 acres, records the value of improvements actually made at £41,259, as against the statutory requirements of £30,011, with a minimum of defaulters.

The recent amendment in the law (section 25 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1920) reviving the right of lessees to purchase the fee-simple of lease-in-perpetuity settlement holdings will, it is anticipated, be taken advantage of by a fair percentage of the remaining 302 lessees under that heading, when Dominion finances return to more normal conditions.

TARANAKI.

(H. J. LOWE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The older-established settlements, with the exception of Croydon, appear well established. As regards the latter, some tenants thereon are doing well, but others appear to have allowed their pastures to run out, or the grass has not responded to the treatment supplied. I hope, with the assistance and advice of the Supervisor of Discharged Soldier Settlements, these ill effects may be remedied, and the particular sections brought back to more favourable conditions. This year the following settlements for soldiers have been placed on the market: Taitama, Ratapiko, Araheke, Tawhiwhi, Kohura, Marco, Huatoki, Huia, and Karu; while under section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act Mangamairi and Rahu Settlements, two farms for individual soldiers, were acquired. It is premature at this stage to forecast, but the first three appear to be settling down well to the dairying business, while the older-established settlements, excepting Croydon, are well established.

WELLINGTON.

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

The main operations for the year under this heading have been the purchase of land under the provisions of section 3 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, 1917, by which twenty-two properties, comprising 16,234 acres, were acquired, subdivided into suitable farms for dairying, sheep and cattle raising, and allotted to eighty-six applicants.

Two estates—Haunui No. 2 and Almadale—comprising 1,017 acres of good country suitable for dairying and mixed farming, will be offered in sixteen allotments early this year under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act.

The balance of the Normandale Settlement, acquired some years ago, comprising fourteen allotments of a total area of 243 acres, was offered by auction for cash or deferred payments, and twelve allotments were selected.