

The latter had acquired holdings under the Government scheme, and the former included both farm owners and labourers, almost all of whom were satisfied with their prospects.

The delegates met with instances of three or four ex-officers working conjointly on one farm. In each case they were doing well, their principal occupation being fattening of lambs.

By this method of co-operation a saving can be effected in the "labour bill," and more time afforded for improving the land and managing the farm. It is specially suitable for ex-officers who have ideas and habits of living in common, and the Immigration Department will give every assistance to such officers as may agree to pool their capital and work together on these lines.

Officers or men possessing a capital of a few hundred pounds will find good openings as share farmers, this form of farming being common in the dairying districts of both North and South Islands, but they should be ready to work for the first year or two as farm labourers, in order to gain experience of the farming methods of the country.

The usual arrangement is for the owner to provide the land, stock, equipment, &c., and for the sharer to furnish the labour. The former takes two-thirds and the latter one-third of the monthly receipts from the butter-factory, and usually 50 per cent. of the profits on the sale of calves and pigs.

At present it is difficult for men with capital of a thousand pounds and upwards to buy land at a price that would yield a good interest on the capital invested, though conditions may undergo a change during the next few years.

Most soldier settlers have been established, and met with success, upon farms used for dairying and fattening lambs. In fruit-farming, however—especially in the Nelson District—many have encountered difficulties which seem to preclude success under existing conditions.

The demand for farm hands is general, but men without means should not arrive in New Zealand during the months of June, July, and August, when there is little employment for newly arrived unskilled labourers.

Generally speaking, farmers have been suffering from a period of depression during the last three years, mainly because of the inflation of land-values after the war, and of the fall in prices of stock, buildings, &c., since 1921. But a considerable improvement took place in 1922, when the value of butter and cheese exported increased by £5,000,000 and of wool by £2,500,000.

Though there is no Government scheme for placing settlers on the land, it may be noted that about seven thousand migrants arrived in 1922, the majority of whom are prospering on the land either as farmers or farm labourers. There is good reason, therefore, to believe in the prospects for soldiers who determine to settle on the land.

Ex-service men can rely upon receiving advice and assistance from the Immigration Department, and also from the Returned Soldiers' Association, many ex-Imperial men having testified to the valuable help extended to them through the various branches of that organization. The association offers the same advantages to the ex-Imperial as to the New Zealand returned soldier. A number of ex-soldier settlers have been assisted financially, and employment has been found for others. We desire to express our appreciation of the excellent work thus done by the association.

LANDS.

16. DESCRIPTION OF COUNTRY.—The Dominion of New Zealand—apart from the mandated territories—consists of two main Islands and a number of small islands adjacent to them.

The area of the North Island and the islands attached to it is 44,130 square miles, and of the South Island 58,120 square miles. Their combined area is therefore 102,250 square miles, which is 13,505 square miles in excess of that of Great Britain.

The North Island is irregular in shape. It is about 500 miles long and 175 miles wide in the centre. It tapers to a long thin point in the north and narrows considerably to the south.

The South Island is about the same length, but is more uniform in shape and varies from 100 to 150 miles in width. The coast-lines of both Islands are in many places deeply indented.

It is estimated that one-tenth of the surface of the North Island, and a still greater proportion than that of the South Island, is mountainous.

In the North Island the mountains do not exceed 6,000 ft. in height, but in the South Island they are much higher, many of the peaks in the Southern Alps—the great range that runs almost the entire length of the Island—being over 10,000 ft. in altitude.

Many rivers flow rapidly from the mountains until they reach the low ground in the bottom of the valleys, when they lose their velocity and become very wide. They are not of much use for navigation, but they will undoubtedly be turned to good account by generating electric power for distribution amongst the farmers. There are also a great number of lakes varying from 238 square miles to three square miles in area.

It might be supposed from such a bald statement that, though the country may be very picturesque, it is not specially suitable for agricultural purposes. Naturally the area occupied by the rivers and lakes, which is by no means inconsiderable, is useless for farming, and the combination of mountains and rivers renders transport costly and difficult. The amount of arable land is also limited, but what there is of it is usually very good. There is far more and better grazing on the mountains than might be supposed. The Dominion is in fact extremely fertile as well as very beautiful.

Other physical features which may not concern the farmer as intimately as those already mentioned, but which are remarkable and not to be overlooked, are the evidences of volcanic and thermal activity, and of seismic disturbances, which are manifest throughout both Islands.

There are several volcanoes which erupt from time to time, though only on a small scale, and there are also an extraordinary number of hot springs and geysers.