

LAND SOLD.

The receipts from land sold on immediate payments last year are about double what they were for the previous year. This is not because a greater area was sold, but arises from the land fetching a higher average price than formerly. The open farming land on the Waimate Plains sold for cash at an average of £6 6s. 8d. per acre, suburban land at £11, and town lands at £87 15s. 6d. per acre. The settlement of this country, on account of Native obstruction, and its natural beauty and fertility, excited more than usual interest. It was surveyed into sections of from 50 to 100 acres each, and every third section was offered for application on deferred payments. After the deferred-payment selectors had made their choice, each selector being allowed only one section on these terms, the intermediate sections were offered for sale by auction on immediate payments, open to all bidders. In this way, the deferred payment-selector had an opportunity of adding to his holding, by buying the surrounding sections. The object of these arrangements was to insure residence, and to have as large a population settled on the plains as could reasonably be supposed to thrive on them as farmers, and, at the same time, to prevent any one frustrating that object by buying a large area in one solid block. The results attained have very well realized the aim of these intentions, for there are on the rural lands 180 settlers, holding 22,426 acres, or an average of 125 acres to each farm. Then there are tradesmen and others who have purchased 41 suburban sections, of from 5 to 10 acres each, and 295 town sections of a quarter-acre each; and 57 village selectors on deferred payments, holding on an average 25 acres each. The European population of the Plains on 3rd April last was 361, and of Opunake, 177.

The total area disposed of in settlement, including the bush block behind the continuous Native reserve, is as under:—

	A.	R.	P.		£	s.	d.
Total cash sales	14,825	1	3	realized ...	88,683	11	6
Deferred-payment, rural	7,600	2	26	„ ...	38,232	5	10
Deferred-payment, Village-settlement	1,421	0	32	„ ...	7,682	19	5
Total ...	23,847	0	23	„	134,598	16	9

Or nearly £6 an acre, inclusive of 5,400 acres of bush land, and of town, suburban, and village lands.

Reserves have been made for educational and municipal endowments, school sites, hospital, recreation, public buildings, athenæums, agricultural society grounds, gravel pits, cemeteries, and other purposes of public utility. Several of the religious bodies have secured by purchase sites at Manaia for churches, and the Bank of New Zealand has established an agency there.

The settlement of this fine district is proceeding most satisfactorily; the face of the country is being rapidly transformed from an unbroken wilderness of sombre fern and forest to the green landscape, enlivened by numerous homesteads, herds of cattle, and cultivated fields. And there still remains for disposal 90,000 acres of level and sloping bush land, which is being opened by survey and clearing of road lines preparatory to settlement. The country from Wanganui northwards, along the coast line, is undoubtedly the finest grazing district in New Zealand, and the settlement of the Waimate Plains extends it up to the base of Mount Egmont. The opening of the Parihaka Block is still a further step northwards. The first portion of this block, about 5,000 acres, was offered for sale in February last, in sections ranging from 5 up to 320 acres each. There were no sales at first; but 37 sections, comprising 4,040 acres, have since been taken up on application by twenty-four purchasers at from £2 to £5 an acre for cash, and there are only three sections now remaining for disposal. Other 10,000 acres of the same block are surveyed, and maps are now in preparation prior to sale of land. The Parihaka Block lies along the coast line for 12 miles; it is about 2½ miles wide, and on its inland side it fronts for 10 miles the road recently formed, and along which coach traffic is now regularly maintained between New Plymouth and Hawera. In the further occupation of this block there will be an almost complete cordon of settlements around the base of Mount Egmont, and that mountain will then become the centre of one of the most populous and flourishing districts in the colony.

It would be tedious to enter into details regarding all the lands sold during the year; but, as the sale of land, more especially bush lands, has been greatly promoted by the opening out of roads through the blocks prior to sale, a short statement may be given of the Kairanga blocks, on which the greatest acreage outlay has been made before sale, and the results of that sale. The Kairanga blocks are distant by road from 3 to 8 miles from Palmerston North, and comprise 8,582 acres of level bush land, which every winter was for a considerable portion of its area under water, from 2 to 3 feet deep. On levels being carefully taken, the best lines of outfall were discovered; these were cleared of bush, a chain or a chain and a half wide, drains cut, and the stuff thrown out formed the roads; 14 miles of drains and 18 miles of roads were formed in this manner, at a total cost of £5,000, or 11s. 8d. per acre. Lithograph plans of the block were then published and distributed; and intending settlers, with maps in hand, were able to walk or ride into the heart of the block and view the land. The sale was held in Palmerston North on 21st February last, when 43 sections, comprising 5,090 acres, were sold for cash, realizing £11,075 or £2 3s 6d per acre; and 22 sections, comprising 2,628 acres, were sold on deferred payments, realizing £7,787, or very nearly £3 per acre, payable by half-yearly instalments over ten years. There are only four sections remaining unsold, and three sections of