

MILITARY PENSIONS.

Pensions in Force.—The number of pensioners under this head on the 31st March was 1,240, including 128 Maoris, and representing an increase on the figures of the previous year of 672, thus :—

	Europeans.	Maoris.	Total.
New grants	623	124	747
Deduct—			
Deaths	72	2	
Cancellations	1	..	75
Increase	..	..	672

The liability in regard to these, all of whom are drawing the full pension of £36, was £44,640.

The distribution of the pensioners throughout the Dominion is set out in Table II of the appendix, showing 1,151 located in the North Island and 89 in the South Island.

The return relating to the ages of the European pensioners appearing in Table V shows 71 to be below the age of 65, and 125 of the age of 80 and upwards. Of the latter 31 are 85 and over, 5 are 90 and over, and 2, the oldest, are 96.

The total deaths to the end of the year number 83, 3 of which were of Maoris.

New Claims.—The claims lodged during the year numbered 736, being 52 less than in the previous year. These, with the 211 adjourned at the beginning of the year, made a total of 947 dealt with, which were accounted for as follows :—

Granted	747
Rejected (including deaths)	34
Adjourned for production of medal	166
Total	947

The total claims lodged to date number 1,524, of which 1,324 have been established. These included 194 claims from Maoris, to 131 of whom pensions have been granted.

In all there have been, including the claims actually completed and lodged, 1,641 inquiries regarding the pension, including a number from outside the Dominion.

Of the 34 rejections, 10 represent deaths, 14 where no medal has been awarded, 3 where residence is incomplete, and 7 where character is unsatisfactory.

In Table IX are set out the pensions granted in each year, the deaths and cancellations over the same period, and the annual liability.

Table XII contains details relating to the regiments of the pensioners at the close of the year. 272 were members of the Imperial Forces which visited the Dominion, the remaining 968 being associated with the various colonial corps, the Native contingents being represented by 118 of these.

Payments.—The gross payments for the year under this head amounted to £29,447, an increase of £25,766 on the figures of the previous year which represented only four months' payments. After deducting a small amount for overpaid instalments refunded, the net charge against the Consolidated Fund was £29,445. The cost per head of the European population for this class of pension was a little over 6d. for the year.

The gross payments to date have been as follows :—

	£
1912-13 (four months)	3,681
1913-14	29,447
Total	£33,128

The instalments absolutely forfeited during the year amounted to £140.

The amount paid on account of military pensions to the controlling bodies of the various homes and hospitals throughout the Dominion during the year was £1,505, including £77 paid for medical attention in hospitals. The number paying for their maintenance at the close of the year was 45, including 4 in hospitals.

General.—The number of old-age pensioners who had applied to the end of the year to have their pensions converted to military pensions was 519. Of these, 67 were found to be ineligible owing to their inability to prove the award of the New Zealand War Medal, the remaining 452 having their claims to the increased amount established. The annual saving to the old-age pensions vote on account of these latter is represented by the sum of £11,195, an average of £24 15s. per pension, made up as follows :—

	Number of Pensioners.	Annual Amount. £
At 31st March, 1913	380	9,422
During 1913-14	72	1,773
Total at 31st March, 1914	452	£11,195

In regard to the issue of New Zealand War Medals, the decision was arrived at towards the end of the year 1913 not to recognize further claims beyond the 31st March last, which date was subsequently extended as far as Maori applicants were concerned to 30th June, 1914, the effect of which will, of course, be to bring finality to the number of applications for the pension. As indicating to what extent advantage has been taken of the facilities provided for obtaining the medal up to the dates named, it may be mentioned that between the date of the passing of the Military Pensions Act in November, 1912, and the present time over 400 new medals have been awarded by the Defence authorities, including 160 to members of the various Native contingents. The issue of such a large number has somewhat upset the estimate of the cost of providing a military pension, which in the first instance was submitted at £25,000 per annum for the restricted pension payable under the 1912 Act, and subsequently increased by £10,000 under the Act of last year. The position at the present time is that the liability under this head has been increased approximately by a further £10,000.