

Appendix II of the report shows (on pages 35 to 39) full details of the estates acquired under the Act, and the purposes for which they are utilized. A large number of the settlers have already taken advantage of the right to acquire the freehold, and consequently some of the settlements are not now occupied by Crown tenants, but are privately owned in the same manner as they were before the Government acquired them for closer settlement, with this difference: that in place of one or two owners the estates are now occupied by a number of independent freeholders, who have already made a thorough success of their holdings.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT.

At the close of the year the area included within the national endowment was 8,619,341 acres, of which an area of 6,374,628 acres was occupied, at an annual rental of £103,556. The gross revenue collected during the year in respect of this endowment was £108,574, being an increase of £5,303 over the previous year's figures.

INSPECTIONS BY CROWN LANDS RANGERS.

The area covered by the Rangers in the course of their statutory inspections was 3,327,322 acres, comprised in 8,364 properties. The value of improvements required by the Act was £1,412,112, and the amount actually effected was £2,863,499. Full details regarding each district will be found in Table 32 of the appendix.

KAURI-GUM LAND SETTLEMENT.

In order to provide, on easy terms, small holdings in kauri-gum reserves or Crown land, provision was made in section 20 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1912, for the disposal of allotments not exceeding 25 acres in area either on the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure or on deferred-payment license, at the option of the selector. During the year five sections in Rodney County, containing 116 acres, were opened for selection; and further areas of 800 acres at the Wade, comprised in thirty-seven sections, and 900 acres near Mercer, were prepared for settlement. Additional areas of 9,000 acres in Mangonui County, 1,000 acres in Otamatea County, and 2,000 acres in Hobson County were also surveyed; whilst 5,000 acres in Mangonui County and 12,000 acres at the Bay of Islands were inspected preliminary to their survey into areas of from 250 acres to 600 acres. The subdivision of these lands is well advanced, and plans will soon be available so as to enable the areas to be placed on the market. The total area of kauri-gum lands nearing completion for settlement purposes is 30,700 acres.

KAURI-GUM INDUSTRY.

The Kauri-gum Industry Amendment Act, 1914, was passed for the purpose of affording relief, and for fostering the kauri-gum industry during the crisis following on the declaration of war. It authorizes the Minister of Lands to—

- (a.) Work any Crown lands situated within a kauri-gum district, and drain and generally improve any such lands for future close settlement, fruit-growing, &c., by gum-diggers and others:
- (b.) Purchase and sell kauri-gum, and advance to the vendors of gum a proportion of the estimated value of the gum purchased.

A special report showing the operations undertaken under this Act is being laid before Parliament as a separate parliamentary paper (C.-12), and shows what has been achieved in assisting the industry and the diggers at a time when a large body of workers were feeling the effects of war-conditions on their means of livelihood.

LAND-DRAINAGE BRANCH.

Details of the works carried out by this branch are set forth in the attached report of the Chief Drainage Engineer. The major works comprise the reclamation of Hauraki Plains, Rangitaiki Plains, and Waihi Swamp, representing some 190,000 acres altogether. The operations of the branch are extending each year, and the services of the Chief Drainage Engineer are in request throughout the Dominion, in connection with similar projected works, as the success of reclamation-works carried out by this Department has demonstrated the potentialities of swamp lands in general. Particulars relating to Hauraki Plains and Rangitaiki Plains are to be found in papers C.-8 and C.-11 respectively.