

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.—SETTLEMENT OF CROWN LANDS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS ON
SETTLEMENT OPERATIONS DURING THE TWELVE MONTHS WHICH ENDED ON
THE 31st MARCH, 1915.

AUCKLAND.

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

LANDS OPENED FOR SELECTION.

At the beginning of the year the total area of Crown land lying open for selection within the district under the various tenures was 242,389 acres; and during the year a total area of 97,634 acres was opened, of which 49,506 acres were placed on the market for the first time, and 48,128 acres had been offered previously. The principal blocks of land offered for the first time included three portions of Hauraki Plains reclaimed swamp, totalling 10,369 acres, in fifty-three sections; 1,008 acres of worked-out gum land at Swanson, a few miles from Auckland, divided into eighty-six sections; 4,966 acres near Kawakawa, divided into eleven sections; two land-for-settlement estates, totalling 4,418 acres, in twenty-four allotments; and 1,836 acres near Otorohanga, subdivided into twelve sections.

Notwithstanding the unusual conditions that have existed during the greater part of the year, the inquiry for land has continued keen, and the applications for all favoured classes of land, especially dairying country capable of being brought into early profit, have been numerous. At the ballot for an area of Hauraki Plains land, held on the 31st March, there were 1,814 applications for thirty-three sections of land, ranging from 68 acres to 594 acres, and as each application covered a considerable number of sections the aggregate number of applications for the whole of the sections exceeded 12,000—probably a record in ballots.

The total area of land taken up during the year was 117,894 acres, by 727 selectors.

THE VARIOUS TENURES.

The occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure still maintains its position as first favourite amongst selectors in the district, as is evidenced by the fact that out of 49,159 acres taken up under the optional system, 46,293 acres were selected under this tenure, which numbered at the close of the year 2,959 holders, occupying 799,248 acres, considerably over one-third of the number and area of all Crown holdings in the district.

The lease-in-perpetuity tenure holds second place, with 1,570 holders occupying 351,878 acres. This tenure has lost considerably during the year from acquisitions of freehold either for cash or on deferred payment.

The third most important tenure is the renewable lease, numbering 846 holders of 205,649 acres.

The other tenures do not call for any special remark, but as evidencing the growth of settlement in the mining districts of the Hauraki Peninsula it is satisfactory to note that the area under occupation has increased during the year from 84,556 acres, held by 482 lessees, to 102,422 acres, occupied by 523 selectors. The roading to give access to these pastoral leases will be heavy, and in many instances steep grades only can be provided.

ACQUISITION OF THE FREEHOLD.

The total area of Crown land alienated under freehold title for cash during the year was 70,090 acres, the number of purchasers being 439, and the price realized £70,181. In addition to these, 111 other holders, occupying 25,987 acres, commenced the acquisition of the freehold by the deferred-payment system, under which there were at the close of the year 199 selectors, holding 29,893 acres. Since the commencement of the war there has been a considerable falling-off in freehold transactions.

GENERAL CONDITION OF SETTLEMENT.

The weather-conditions of the past season have proved exceptionally trying to farmers, especially in the northern and central portions of the district. The usual spring growth was largely checked by high cold winds and want of rain, following which came one of the driest summers experienced for a considerable time. As a result many of the white crops were practically failures, and were fed off, not being worth harvesting. Root and fodder crops were also to a very large extent failures, and in many parts had to be prematurely fed off. The shortage of water and feed has been very severe on dairy stock, and considerably curtailed the milking season. Fortunately the serious prospects for the coming winter have been very materially