

24. When land in the Lees Valley was opened for selection the Canterbury Patriotic Fund granted £200 in several cases as an addition to the Government advance of £500 so as to assist the soldiers in making a financial success of their holdings, whilst the North Canterbury Farmers' Co-operative Association and several Oxford residents and Canterbury runholders gave generous assistance. In both this and the preceding case the land taken up was hilly pastoral country in large areas, and although it is very suitable for settlement a fair amount of capital is required to work the land to advantage. It is understood that several other patriotic societies and individuals have likewise assisted in a similar manner, though particulars are not available.

25. In the Mangapaoro and Matakaoa districts (Poverty Bay) an area of 3,850 acres, valued at £40,000, has been constituted "The Waiapu Returned Soldiers Trust Estate," the trustees being Messrs. Thomas Sydney Williams (Tuparoa), Heathcote Beetham Williams (Gisborne), Arnold Beetham Williams (Waipiro Bay), and Kenneth Stuart Williams (Tuparoa), who have sole discretion in the matters of subdivision and choice of settlers. The returned soldiers must have been *bona-fide* residents of the Waiapu County before enlistment. On the security of the land, money for stock and implements for the settlers has been borrowed from the Bank of New Zealand, the interest and principal having to be repaid. The net profits of the estate are for the relief and benefit of needy returned soldiers of the Waiapu County, for the relief of dependants of killed soldiers and sailors, and also for assistance to war relief societies and associations generally. The action of the Messrs. Williams in donating this land and establishing a practical scheme of settlement is another example of generosity displayed by this well-known family. The land will not be allotted to the soldiers until the return of the Main Body, but is being worked for their benefit by the trustees in the meantime.

LANDS SELECTED.

26. During the year ended 31st March, 1916, when the Act had been only a short time in operation, only two allotments had been selected, aggregating 629 acres. During the past year, however, applications were fairly numerous, over four hundred soldiers having applied for specific sections, and of these 319 were provided with 143,524 acres of land; 180 settlers being placed upon Crown land and 131 settlers upon land acquired under the Land for Settlements Act. The greater part of the settlers took up the land under the special lease conditions provided by section 4 of the 1915 Act and the regulations framed thereunder, which appear to meet the requirements of the soldier settlers in a very satisfactory manner. The Wellington District was the most favoured, as 124 soldiers selected land here, and the next in favour was the Auckland District, with seventy-two selections, whilst Hawke's Bay, with fifty-seven, was a good third; and it would appear that in the majority of cases soldiers prefer to settle in the North Island, as several settlements of good land in the South have failed to find applicants.

27. The Land Boards, both when examining the applicants as to their capabilities and requirements and when allotting land, have endeavoured to place them on holdings suited to their needs, and where necessary have recommended exemptions from rent for any necessary period or recommended postponement if such would meet the case, and in every way have assisted the settlers in entering into possession under most favourable conditions. The co-operation of the Agricultural Department has been availed of, and advice has been rendered by its experts regarding the best cultivation of the land to any soldier settler who may desire it. The Crown Lands Rangers have periodically visited the settlers and also rendered assistance, with the result in the majority of cases that the settlers have already done very well.

28. An instance of the patriotism displayed by one of the discharged soldiers coming under notice during the year was furnished by Mr. Leonard Ashworth, who was a member of the Second Reinforcements, being attached to the Wellington Mounted Rifles, and served for nearly two years. After having been severely wounded in the head, in August, 1915, he was invalided to England, and finally conveyed back to New Zealand and discharged from service with the Expeditionary Force. Having sufficiently recovered from his wounds, he applied for land under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act of 1915, and was allotted a section of 116 acres at Takapau, Hawke's Bay, in June, 1916. He was granted advances under the Act to enable him to improve and stock the land, whilst a mercantile firm also gave him further advances. Since going on to the land Mr. Ashworth worked well, fenced and subdivided the land, and having had a good lambing, his profits enabled him to discharge outside liabilities and the Crown's interest and rent, and further stock the section, whilst he also built a four-roomed cottage. As, however, Mr. Ashworth's short stay on the land restored his health, he re-enlisted in the Expeditionary Force, and was accepted for a further term of service.

STOCKING OF FARMS.

29. The various Commissioners of Crown Lands render all possible assistance to the soldier settlers in the matter of procuring stock, and if so desired make the necessary purchases on their behalf. The soldiers are not debarred from arranging their own purchases, subject, of course, to the supervision necessary to ensure that the stock represent reasonable value by way of security for the money advanced for the purchase. As many of the men who are acquiring sections have had a very limited experience in farming, their judgment of the value of the different classes of stock is not such as to qualify them to bid directly at auction, and they are therefore encouraged to arrange their purchases privately. The advice of a Crown Lands Ranger or Inspector of Stock is always available to assist in the negotiations for purchase of suitable stock at reasonable prices.

30. The Crown Lands Rangers are instructed to ascertain the requirements of the different settlers as soon as they select their lands, and to get into touch with the local branches of the patriotic societies, from whom valuable information, gained by the practical experience and local