

these were divided into eleven farms, making twenty-six selectors, of whom fifteen are dairying and the remainder using their holdings for sheep and mixed farming. The total selections were thus seventy-seven, comprising 22,151 acres. Six selectors surrendered an area of 341 acres, and these had not been reselected at the close of the year, being principally dairying and cropping land. The other areas available for selection were thirteen sections of bush country, comprising 12,323 acres.

Of the 250 settlers shown as holding at the close of the year 125 are or will be using their farms for grazing—about eighty-five sections comprising bush areas being gradually brought into pasture—and 110 are dairying, the remainder being small allotments in isolated localities where the holder will run a cow and keep poultry as an addition to providing himself with a home.

On seventy-five sections of bush country the selectors have to date felled and grassed 7,748 acres, 1,720 acres of which have been felled, burned, and grass-seed shown this season. The value of improvements is £44,362, and the stock on these holdings comprise 1,306 cattle, 75 calves, 6,318 sheep, 109 horses, and 63 pigs, valued at £18,269.

The reports of the Rangers on the various settlements are generally speaking very satisfactory, and the success of the settlers on the whole of these settlements, with the exception of perhaps two, is practically assured.

In some cases the settlers are doing particularly well, as for example the Wainuioru Block, which is grazing-country, and the Kopane Settlement, which is purely dairying. On this settlement one of the settlers took a gross sum of £500 for the season off a 31-acre section, which emphasizes the fact that high-class dairy land is the most suitable.

There were twenty-three surrenders and forfeitures, and only thirteen of these may be considered as failures. In my report of the previous year I anticipated that about 13 per cent. would not succeed, but the percentage of this year's figures is only 5·2, which indicates that as those who were not fitted for farming relinquished their holdings they were replaced by a better class of man, and emphasizing what I have always contended, that if men are found who will work their farms to the fullest capacity there will be no doubt of their ultimate success on the land.

The sum of £23,250 was advanced under section 2 of the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Amendment Act, 1917, for the purchase and discharge of mortgages of sixteen properties, comprising an area of 3,677 acres, of which six are dairy farms, seven are used for grazing, and three for poultry and market-gardening. Eight of these purchases were Crown leaseholds.

The sum of £96,659 was advanced for the purchase or erection of 140 dwellings on other than rural land.

#### NELSON.

(H. D. McKELLAR, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The bush areas that have been set aside for selection solely by discharged soldiers are not very keenly sought after by the men who have returned, but no doubt as the soldiers who are not handicapped by wounds or ill health return these lands will be taken up. The class of land most generally favoured by soldiers here is improved land suitable for dairying. The bulk of the discharged soldiers who have settled in this district have taken over such farms as going concerns, taking advantage of the current milking season to make a start. One or two soldiers have been settled on orchards, but the majority of the men are diffident about risking anything in this industry, as they consider it is not yet fairly established.

In such cases as can be judged the men are making satisfactory progress and are taking a keen interest in their properties, and give promise of turning out successful settlers. The majority of the soldiers settled have, however, not yet had time to get properly established on their farms, and it is too early to judge their capabilities and prospects of success. Next year I shall be in a better position to report.

#### MARLBOROUGH.

(H. J. LOWE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

During the year two sections of ordinary Crown lands were selected on special tenures, and six sections in Erina Settlement on ordinary tenures. The question of the success of settlement on Crown lands in this district does not present any difficulty, and it is to be regretted that more is not available for settlement, as the properties already settled will grow into money in spite of mistakes or mismanagement. The few settlers, with one exception, are shaping well. In one instance—two settlers on adjoining sections—the result is turning out quite the reverse of expectation. One man is a carpenter by trade and is rapidly making good; the other, born and bred in the district and used to the life, is not shaping so well.

Wither Settlement: No further selections have been made during the year. The small sections are only suitable for homesteads for men working in or about Blenheim. The land is dry and hard in summer and inclined to be wet in winter. It is not intended that the sections should provide a living, although it is considered that orchards could be established that would produce a very fair return—if not a living—after seven years. Two of the settlers are not suitable.

Erina Settlement: This settlement is now mostly occupied, only one section being unlet. This has been applied for, but the application has not been yet dealt with by the Land Board. The settlement is composed of purely sheep-country. Certain portions can be cultivated, but mainly for the purpose of growing sheep-feed. The selectors generally are doing good work, but have suffered through the high prices of all materials necessary to make a beginning. Here again the cry is "The land is too dear," but it is considered that the majority of the settlers will make good if they work with patience and do not expect to become independent in just a year or two.

The provisions of the Amendment Act, 1917, are just beginning to become known, and from the few applications already received and the number of inquiries being made it is anticipated that the office will have a busy time dealing with the applications which will be received for financial assistance to enable discharged soldiers to purchase farm properties and dwellinghouses.