

STATE ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS IN TREE-PLANTING.

The total number of trees disposed of to farmers and local bodies during the year was 420,412, which is an increase of 159,412 over the number disposed of during the previous year. Trees were disposed of gratis to soldier settlers. Inasmuch as tree-planting by farmers will supplement the timber-supplies of the Dominion, will add greatly to its beauty, and will also tend to improve the climatic conditions, there should be no question as to the advisability of the State's encouraging it by disposing of trees at a low price. In many countries, notably Canada, South Africa, and some of the Australian States, tree-planting by settlers has been considered so deserving of encouragement by the State that trees have been for many years disposed of either at a low price or gratis. The best results have, however, been obtained in those States where a small charge is made for the trees, as it has been found that where trees are distributed without charge settlers are liable to take no care of them.

LABOUR AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF DISCHARGED SOLDIERS.

During the first half of the year labour was scarce. To make plantation-work more attractive to discharged soldiers huts are being built for them, and stretchers and bedding have been supplied. Until recently most of the soldier workers have suffered from some physical disability, but since the New Year men in better health have accepted employment. The cost of the work done by soldier labour has exceeded the cost of similar work done by other labour in other localities.

BALANCE-SHEET FOR PLANTATIONS.

The balance-sheets (started last year) showing the financial position with regard to the nursery and the plantations in the North Island have been brought up to date and are published herein; up till the present it has not, for various reasons, been possible to prepare similar balance-sheets for the South Island nurseries and plantations, but this work is now about to be undertaken. When this work is completed the exact financial position of every compartment of trees in each plantation will be known, so that when the timber is felled the profit or loss on the undertaking will be evident.

SURVEYS OF PLANTATIONS.

During the year surveys were made of parts of the Hanmer Springs, Greenvale, and Kaingaroa Plantations, but the completion of these was prevented owing to the surveyors being required for urgent soldier-settlement work. As it is, of course, important that compartment boundaries, fire-lines, and roads should be properly laid down before the planting is done, strenuous efforts will be made during the coming summer to complete the work that has been interrupted.

DISSEMINATION OF FORESTRY INFORMATION.

Great credit is due to the New Zealand Forestry League for the enterprise it has shown in disseminating leaflets giving information on various matters connected with forestry, and advocating that our forests (the necessity of which to a country has been emphasized by the war) should be subjected to scientific management. In Australia and Canada the Forestry Leagues receive official recognition and support, and they do most useful work in spreading information as to the great value of forests to a country and the necessity for their proper management, utilization, and conservation. There is much need of forestry propaganda in this Dominion, and it is to be hoped that the Forestry League will continue and extend the useful work it has started.

The Rev. J. H. Simmonds and other observers have at various times contributed to the *Journal of Agriculture* valuable articles on different exotic trees grown in New Zealand, and it is to be hoped that these enthusiasts will continue to publish the results of their observations, which are of much value to the Forestry Department and private tree-growers.

NURSERY AND PLANTATION STAFF.

In August Mr. R. G. Robinson resigned his position as Superintending Nurseryman for the South Island, and was succeeded by Mr. D. J. Buchanan. Mr. Robinson first joined the service in 1899; he was a most capable and enthusiastic officer, and whilst in the Department had done very valuable work. It is much to be regretted that he could not see his way to stay in this service. Mr. Buchanan's place as plantation foreman at the Whakarewarewa Plantation was filled by the transfer of Mr. Mason from the Waiotapu Plantation.

It is with much regret that I record the death of Mr. W. A. Fraser, B.Sc., assistant forester at Tapanui. He joined the Expeditionary Forces shortly after the declaration of war, and after being twice wounded was killed in action in France last spring. Mr. Fraser was a graduate of the Edinburgh University Forestry School, and had he lived there is no doubt but that he would have risen to a high position in the service.

The increased operations of the Afforestation Branch and the absence of several members of the staff with our military Forces have caused a heavy pressure of work on those officers who remained, but the extra duties have always been most cheerfully and zealously performed.