

LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACCOUNT.

Opening up Roads for Settlement.—In order to provide additional funds for the roading and development of Crown lands for the settlement of returned soldiers, the borrowing authority provided for under section 62 of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1913, was increased last year from £100,000 to £250,000 by section 42 of the Appropriation Act. When labour conditions improve the whole of this authority will be available.

WAIHOU AND OHINEMURI RIVERS IMPROVEMENT ACCOUNT.

Dredging.—Dredging operations were continued during April and May widening the Ngararahi cut to a uniform width of 108 ft. From the end of June to December the dredge was employed pumping sand into the stop-bank at Te Puke Wharf and Ngahina, about 53,000 cubic yards being deposited during that period. After January the Tirohia-Ngararahi cut (left bank) was commenced, and by March 31,000 cubic yards had been deposited, thus completing 15 chains.

Stop-banks.—Work has been continued at Thorp's Bend, on the Paeroa side of Maari, and 12 chains completed. Puke-Ngahina bank has been completed except a culvert at Stock's outfall drain, and works have also been pushed forward at Wright's Hill—Thorp's, Ngahina—Komata Creek, and Tirohia-Ngararahi (left) stop-banks.

Ngahina Wharf and goods-shed extension was commenced in July, but was suspended owing to inability to obtain timber.

A flood-gate has been constructed at the Ngahina-Waimarie stop-bank, and that at Kaouiti repaired.

Considerable drain-cutting has been done in the Tirohia-Rotokohu drainage area, about $5\frac{3}{4}$ miles having been completed, together with an additional 2 miles of surface drains.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The total permanent staff at 31st March was 624. The number (apart from temporary workmen) who joined the Expeditionary Forces was 202, three of whom gained the Distinguished Service Order, six the Military Cross, two the Distinguished-conduct Medal, one the Military Medal, and six gained other distinctions. The casualties were—killed in action, 9; died of wounds, 10; died of sickness, 2; missing, 1; accidentally killed, 1; wounded, 64; gassed, 1: making a total of killed and wounded, 88.

CONCLUSION.

Let me say, in conclusion, that realizing the very natural anxiety on the part of each section of settlers now that the war is over to have its respective roads of access and main roads completed and metalled I have placed on my estimates sums exceeding £1,000,000 for roads and bridges alone. To have attempted to comply with all requests would have necessitated providing over £2,000,000, which would have been absurd for one year's operations.

I have been careful to inquire as to the roads leading to and through returned soldiers' settlements, and have endeavoured in every case to make provision for same.