

Remuera Settlement, near Ohacawai, Bay of Islands: Good progress has been made by nearly all the settlers during the year. The settlement is now getting well established. About 30 chains of new road was constructed. The benefit of the lowering of Lake Omapere is now being felt by those settlers occupying the sections on the lake frontage. There are still three vacant sections on the settlement, which should be selected at any time.

Pakaraka Settlement, near Kawakawa, Bay of Islands: The settlers on this settlement have done as well as could be expected during the past year. More provision than usual has been made for the winter feed. The gorse on this settlement is its greatest drawback, and arrangements are being made to cope with this difficulty.

The Te Pua, Upokonui, and Puketi Settlements are comparatively new. The settlers, however, are shaping well, and have reasonable prospects of "making good."

Waimata Settlement, near Dargaville: The settlers on this block have continued to do very good work. The low price of wool has been a very severe handicap. This settlement is looked upon as being one of the best purchases made by the Government in this district.

Streamlands and Waiteitei Settlements, near Wellsford: The settlers here are still having a very hard struggle. Considerable improvements have been made on both settlements during the past year.

Motutara Settlement, near Waimauku, in the Helensville district: This is a new settlement, opened for selection during the year. Only two sections now remain open for selection. The soldiers are of a good type, and should do well. Feed is in abundance all over the settlement. A great deal of alteration to the buildings has been necessary, and the settlers are now established in their permanent houses. The reputation of this land has been kept up by the soldiers in the fattening of sheep and cattle.

AUCKLAND.

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

General.

The conditions of the past season, which have tested the positions of many established and experienced farmers, have been specially trying to most of the soldier settlers, whose positions had not been sufficiently consolidated to meet such conditions. Although some of them have now been in occupation for four years, the intervening seasons have not been of an entirely favourable character, and have, moreover, in many cases been devoted to the improvement of pastures, the erection of buildings, the development of a dairy herd, and the many other channels of expenditure involved in the creation of a new individual farm. The majority of the soldier settlers are engaged in dairying, and many of them had anticipated that the past season would have enabled them to commence in earnest the reduction of payments which to some extent accumulated during the period of preparation. The low scale of payments made by dairy companies during most of the season has disappointed these expectations, although the bonus payments, which it is hoped will be of a substantial character, should relieve the position.

The majority of the soldiers are doing very good work on their holdings. A minority—who are, fortunately, a comparatively small proportion—appear to regard the land-settlement scheme as a pension arrangement to be used to the fullest possible extent as long as further moneys can be borrowed from the State, and abandoned when these cease or conditions develop less favourably than might have been anticipated. With such men it is a frequent excuse that they cannot succeed on the lands which "the Government placed them on," regardless of the fact that in many cases they selected their own properties.

It is evident that with no prospect of butterfat returning to the high level of the war period dairy-farmers will need to adopt improved methods for increasing their returns, and the soldier settlers, if they are to succeed and pay their way, must share in those methods.

The principal points needing special attention are the improvement of pastures and of cows, and greater attention to the growing of forage and root crops, and the better feeding of dairy cows all the year, but especially in winter. In a great many cases it is quite clear from the returns received from soldier settlers that cows are being kept which are mere "boarders," and are not giving returns adequate to the cost of the pasture—which includes the cost of the land—on which they feed. The average return per cow for the Dominion shows how far we are below the methods of other countries with which we are competing in the world's markets, our inferior record in this respect having probably been aggravated by the speculative conditions of recent years, since those who bought farms merely for resale would not devote time and money to building up a dairy herd. There appears to be urgent need for some standard system of grading dairy stock which will prevent the sale or perpetuation of the inferior stock which are now much too prevalent. As regards the feeding of dairy cows, the lax methods that too often prevail are probably due in part to the genial climate of the district, which apparently renders special feeding unnecessary and seems to justify a certain laziness and lack of method in the provision made for dairy stock. There is, however, ample evidence to show that even in the climate of the Auckland District dairy stock cannot be kept at their best standard of production without special feeding, which would yield handsome returns to the dairyman.

Dairy orders have during the past season been utilized in many cases as a means of keeping down current liabilities. Partly owing to the small advance payments made by the companies, the results have been disappointing. I regret to observe that there is an unwillingness on the part of certain companies to assist their suppliers by giving full effect to such orders.

Lands selected.

The total number of holdings of Crown and settlement lands selected by discharged soldiers during the year was 115, comprising an area of 18,674 acres, and at the close of the year the total