

the most valuable crop the land will ever produce. A considerable area of land in the Pelorus district has been withheld from settlement for some time with the idea of utilising the fine timber growing thereon, which, as timber gets scarce in the southern part of the North Island, especially round Wellington, will command a price that will well repay its conversion.

“THE LAND FOR SETTLEMENTS ACT, 1894.”

Full details of the operations under this Act have already been supplied (see C.—5, 1895), so that nothing but a summary of results will be given here.

	Number.	Area.		Cost to Date.		
		A.	R. P.	£	s.	d.
Up to the 31st March, 1894, there had been purchased	5 estates	9,113	0 14	39,966	6	7
" " 1895,	3 "	5,991	1 1	25,290	15	9
Total to 31st March, 1895	8 "	15,104	1 15	65,257	2	4
At the 31st March, 1895, arrangements had been made to purchase	5 "	28,819	0 0	102,515	0	0
Since that date offers have been accepted for	5 "	7,778	0 0	27,789	0	0
Total area and estimated cost to date	18 "	53,701	1 15	195,561	2	4

A considerable amount of settlement has taken place on the six estates which had been cut up and offered for selection up to the 31st March last, and ninety-six selectors have taken the place of six owners to whom the lands formerly belonged. Not all of these are resident at present, but preparations were in nearly all cases being made to occupy the lands at that date.

The lands which were let up to the 31st March last were paying a return of 4·14 per cent. on the capital invested.

THE CHEVIOT ESTATE.

From the return appended hereto it will be seen that during the year the cash sales brought to account were of 5,181 acres 3 roods, and the amount received £26,613 16s. 7d. Leases in perpetuity were granted for 1,744 acres 3 roods 17 perches, the annual rent of which is £355 19s. 10d.

Grazing leases of twenty-one years' tenure were granted over 17,605 acres 2 roods, the yearly rent of which comes to £2,581 17s. 2d. Licenses for grazing, for generally short periods, were issued for 1,970 acres 2 roods 19 perches, yielding £464 17s. 11d. per annum; and the receipts from the landing and shipping service and other minor sources amount to £1,767 4s. 11d.

The balance-sheet of the estate, which is given on Table A.B., shows the actual cost of the portion of the estate which is still owned by the State to be £274,107. For this the annual rental is about £14,140.

It will probably require a further sum to put the roads and bridges into fairly good condition. If this be added to the present cost as above, the rent-roll is 5 per cent. per annum.

The rents of the estate are payable half-yearly in advance, and it is pleasant to state that, although at the 31st March there were £1,345 of rents in technical arrear, yet at the time of writing this there is only one tenant—a village settler—whose rent of £11 5s. has not been paid. This tells well for the high class of Crown tenantry who occupy the Cheviot lands.

The works which have been carried out to improve the value of the property consist of 64½ miles of dray-road, about sixteen miles of which have been gravelled; the building of eight bridges (total, 380ft.); and the strengthening and improvement of the landing-slip and boat-service at Port Robinson. The construction of the road to the port was a heavy undertaking, but its value is now proved by a comparison of the cost of carriage by the old roundabout road with the cost by this new direct way to the middle of the property at the Township of McKenzie.

The table of imports and exports show partially the trade of the place; but it should also be considered that there is a first-class road for forty miles to the Waipara Railway-station, on which coaches run almost daily, and several large wagons are constantly employed.

THERMAL SPRINGS, ETC.

During the year nothing of particular moment has occurred with respect to the districts in charge of the department where thermal springs are situated. A further sale of leases of town and suburban lands has taken place at Rotorua, with the following result: Forty-seven town lots, eight suburban and two rural sections were disposed of, for an annual rental of £233 5s.

The town of Rotorua is increasing fast in size and in the character of the buildings erected there; whilst the trees planted under the direction of the Town Board and by private individuals have grown so much as to make a very great improvement in the appearance of the place. A very large and first-class hotel, containing seventy rooms, is now in process of erection by Nathan and Co., which will supply accommodation, and, being close to the Sanatorium and the railway-station, it will be found very convenient for the class of people who desire to test the efficacy of the thermal waters. Considerable improvements have been made in the bathing accommodation, so that a large number of people can now enjoy the benefit of the baths without waiting so long, as has been the case heretofore. But even now the accommodation requires extending. The opening of the railway from Auckland has had the effect of materially increasing the number of visitors, and it should have the effect of reducing the cost of living, besides giving invalids the advantage of more comfortable travelling.

The Hanmer Springs, in Northern Canterbury, continue to be visited by a considerable number of persons, a large number of whom were suffering from various affections, which the springs had the effect of much ameliorating. A ladies' concrete swimming-bath has been added to the establishment, besides other improvements, during the year.

The following table shows particulars as to baths taken, &c., and the reports of the officers in charge of each establishment will be found in the Appendix:—