

## FLAX INDUSTRY.

The importance of this great industry is every day becoming more apparent, and its great possibilities are forcing themselves upon the attention of the Land Board and the Department. There are very large areas of Crown swamp in different districts, and particularly in the Piako, which, with an expenditure of, say, from £1 to £1 10s. an acre, would raise their values to anything from £5 per acre upwards.

During the past year arrangements were made with Mr. Scotcher, flaxmiller, in the Piako Swamp, to plant out in flax-plants the poorest part of the swamp as an experiment. On looking at the plants a few days ago with the Hon. Mr. McNab, I was astonished at the growth and the success under such conditions. It augurs well for the future prospects of flax-growing that such good results can be produced from poor land.

Experts in the past have advised that 300 acres of closely grown flax, when once established, will provide employment in perpetuity for a mill employing fifty hands in the cutting, milling, and drying; but even if it required an area of 500 or 1,000 acres, the advantage to the country as a whole would be enormous. I, therefore, am decidedly of opinion that Crown land capable of growing flax should be conserved with this end in view, and only offered after it has been sufficiently drained for that purpose. Broadly speaking, what I mean is not thorough draining, but having the main outlets cut, so that every flax-farmer would know from the first where his drains would run, and would then gladly do the rest himself.

## HAURAKI PASTORAL LEASES.

From the Ranger's report it will be seen that this form of tenure is one that appeals to the classes of selectors of land over which the conditions of occupation prescribed apply. Improvements have not fallen due on many of the selections, but during the ensuing year the required time will have expired, when it will be necessary to inspect the holdings, and at the end of the year a better idea will be given of how selectors have carried out their obligations. I would point out that, as the object of the Hauraki Pastoral Lease Regulations was only to make use of the open country for grazing, no applications, as a rule, are now approved for any land having timber on it that could be used either for milling or mining.

The following is the Ranger's report with regard to these holdings: "This is a tenure that is becoming very popular with the settlers in the mining district. It is the only way of settling these poorer classes of land to advantage, as it gives fairly large areas at low rental. The majority of the area which is open for selection is rough and broken, principally fern land, and only suited for the fire-resisting grasses, such as Danthonia and rat-tail, and when stocked with sheep, which are most suitable for this class of country, it gives good results. Speaking generally, most of the settlers have made good improvements, and are thrifty and contented."

## CORRESPONDENCE.

The Record Clerk reports that during the year 28,264 letters and parcels and 1,791 telegrams were received, and 53,071 letters and parcels and 1,803 telegrams despatched.

## ACCOUNTS.

The Accountant states that the number of vouchers passed through the books during the year amounted to 2,008, representing an expenditure of £48,046 4s. 3d., and forty transfer vouchers showing credits amounting to £3,659 18s. 11d. On the Chief Draughtsman's Imprest Account 1,121 vouchers requiring payment were made by 1,767 cheques, totalling £21,551 3s. 8d.; and the amount imprested by the Paymaster-General was £22,571. On his Official Account 857 cheques were drawn for a total sum of £11,322 19s. 9d.

On the Commissioner's Imprest Account thirteen vouchers requiring payment were made by twenty-one cheques, amounting to £108 13s. 3d., and the amount imprested was £200. On his Official Account eight cheques were drawn for a total sum of £750. The average number of men employed per month on survey parties was seventy-one, for which wages amounting to £7,489 2s. was paid; and for timber-measuring, &c., the average was ten, for which £1,688 9s. 9d. was paid.

The sum of £2,208 11s. 6d. was collected for survey liens, and re-leases (in triplicate) numbering 168 were issued, while ninety-six cards were forwarded to the Auditor of Land Revenue, Wellington. 772 applications to have land cut out in satisfaction of survey liens were forwarded to the Native Land Court.

J. MACKENZIE,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

## HAWKE'S BAY.

## LANDS OPENED FOR SELECTION.

The lands opened for sale and selection under the various tenures during the year reached the total of 42,581 acres. Of this area, 14,506 acres were offered for the first time, and 28,075 acres had been previously offered.

A brisk demand for land continues, the difficulty of meeting which is considerable; and, whether easy of access or otherwise, available areas have been largely applied for, and wholly selected in every instance.