

LANDS OFFERED AND DISPOSED OF DURING THE YEAR.

During the year now closed the operations of the Department have resulted in the following area being thrown open for selection :—

	Acres.
North of Auckland City	14,427
South of Auckland City	66,082
Total	80,509

At the beginning of the year the following area was available for selection :—

	Acres.
North of Auckland City	109,435
South of Auckland City	693,869
Total	803,304

This, with the area opened during the year, made a total open for selection as follows :—

	Acres.
North of Auckland City	123,862
South of Auckland City	759,951
Total	883,813

After the 20th November, 1907, by the coming into operation of the new Act, the whole of the lands in the Guide were withdrawn from application.

In round figures the area taken up during the year has been—

	Acres.
North of Auckland, chiefly in the Counties of Hokianga, Mangonui, Whangarei, and Otamatea	32,400
South of Auckland, chiefly in the Counties of Piako, Opotiki, Waikato, Whakatane, Waitomo, and Waipa	94,100
Total	126,500

CONDITIONS AND PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENT.

A healthy spirit of prosperity appears to permeate the entire district, even those settlers who have been deterred in their operations by indifferent access, and those who later, having already encountered the ordinary trials of pioneer life, suffered loss by fire, showing no signs of being disheartened. At the present moment inquiries from all parts of the Dominion are being made about Auckland lands, doubtless on account of the scarcity of ordinary Crown lands in other districts, as also from the fact that putting blocks regularly in the market is drawing the attention of residents of other parts of the Dominion to Auckland's mild climate and well-distributed rainfall, making land profitable to work that in other districts would hardly be practicable.

RANGERS' REPORTS.

The Crown Lands Rangers have during the year had a very busy time, and their duties have been performed without any semblance of friction with the settlers. Although a Ranger's principal duty is, of course, to make the statutory inspections of holdings provided for by the Land Act, during the year, as in previous years, this work has been greatly interfered with owing to the necessity of utilising the services of the Rangers in a variety of other directions. A Ranger who is working methodically through a particular district may at any moment receive directions to immediately visit a locality far removed from the scene of his operations; and the demands of timber, flax, kauri-gum, scenic, Native, trespass, and other matters probably cut into his statutory work to a very great extent.

The Rangers report as follows :—

North of Auckland.

The steady increase of *bona fide* settlers of a desirable class in the northern district which I referred to last year still continues, fifty-one selectors having taken up land during 1907, thirty-five of these being in Hokianga County, where there is still a considerable area of good second-class land available. Mangonui comes next in favour. In the Bay of Islands and Whangaroa the most of the Crown land available is of too poor a quality to be dealt with in small sections. During the year there has been a decided increase of substantial improvements effected by settlers throughout the district. The area of bush felled is 3,832 acres, as against 1,880 acres last year. The dairying industry is slowly but surely pushing its way to the front, especially in the Mangonui County. There has been great activity in timber, gum, and flax industries. During the last month bush-fires have been raging in many places and doing a considerable amount of damage. In some instances settlers have lost almost all they possessed. Fortunately, the State forests have escaped with very little injury. The settlers in this district are nearly all prosperous and contented.

Bay of Islands County (Part I).—There is very little Crown land fit for settlement left in this county, but there is a large area of first-class Native land lying idle which ought to be utilised. The chief industries