

selves within mining districts. Under the Regulations of the 21st December last a few transactions have taken place, which are shown below; but so far the Act has not been taken advantage of to any great extent. It is stated that the applicants consider it a hardship to have to make a survey of their holdings, but, without such, both public and private rights are likely to be lost sight of; and, as the survey-fees go towards payment of the rent until exhausted, the hardship is more apparent than real. One hundred acres is the limit which can be selected under the Act, and the rental may be anything above 6d. per acre, to be determined by the Land Board. The leases are for terms of twenty-one years, with provisions for renewal, and also for resumption, if required for mining, and occupation is compulsory.

District.	No. of Appli- cations.	Area.		Granted.	Not granted.	Rental.			Total Cash received for Fees, Survey, &c.			Remarks.
		A.	R. P.			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	
Auckland ...	Nil	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Application dealt with since 31st March.
Nelson ...	16	379	0 35	14	2	13	0 0	40	2 6	...	...	Two cases not yet decided by Board.
Westland ...	26	1,732	0 0	Nil	Nil	...	...	...	...	...	...	Within Midland Railway area.
Otago ...	30	1,449	0 0	Nil	Nil	...	...	...	...	...	...	Not yet finally decided by Board.
Southland ...	3	212	0 0	2	1	...	...	21	2 0	...	...	Rental awaits completion of survey and report.
Totals ...	75	3,772	0 35	16	3	13	0 0	61	4 6	...	...	

#### IMPROVED-FARM SETTLEMENTS.

This system of settlement was authorised by "The Lands Improvement and Native Lands Acquisition Act, 1894." It is a modification of the village-homestead system of "The Land Act, 1885," and is intended to provide for a class of selectors who are unable to take advantage of the ordinary tenures under the Land Act; it is, in point of fact, a system of settlement whereby those with small means are enabled to make homes for themselves, and to obtain assistance from the State in clearing their lands. Judging from the number of applications, the provisions of the Act, and Regulations made thereunder, will be taken advantage of to an extent limited only by the land suitable, and the funds which can be applied. Full reports will be found in the Appendix attached hereto, but the results up to the 31st March are summarised below. The main features of the system are, the formation of small associations from whom the Commissioner of Crown Lands of any district may select those who are to form the settlement, being guided by inquiries he makes as to the suitability of the applicants and their inability to acquire land otherwise. The blocks of land set apart are divided into areas of from 10 to 200 acres in accordance with the suitability of the country. The felling of the bush is let to the selectors either by parties or individuals as may be found best, and either on individual sections or on any part of the block, at rates to be fixed by the Chief Surveyor, who is guided in such cases by the ruling rates. Payments are made monthly, so far as practicable. The clearing of not more than 100 acres will be paid for by Government; so far this limit has not nearly been approached. Grass-seed will be provided if required, and also, if necessary, £10 will be advanced towards the erection of a house. Occupation for ten years is essential, and must commence not later than three months after the first burn. The lands are let on lease in perpetuity at a 4-per-cent. rental, or on occupation with right of purchase at a 5-per-cent. rental, both being based on the value of the land, together with the cost of clearing, roading, grassing, or other expenses advanced by the Government added.

Up to the date of this report eighteen settlements have already been formed under these provisions, the area set aside being 21,202 acres, which has been allotted to 193 settlers. The area felled is 4,048 acres, and area grassed is 1,469 acres. The amount paid to selectors to the 31st March was £5,698 4s. 11d., and the value of the improvements on the land (including Government advances) was £6,964 19s. 3d. The eighteen new settlements proclaimed are as follows: In Auckland, 4; in Taranaki, 5; in Hawke's Bay, 1; in Wellington, 3; in Otago, 3; and in Southland, 2. Total area, 21,202 acres.

Ballots for choice of sections have been held as follows: In Auckland, three blocks containing about 3,000 acres have been allotted to twenty-nine settlers, of whom twenty-seven have actually settled.

In Hawke's Bay one block of 1,880 acres has been allotted to sixteen selectors, of whom five are now settled.

In Taranaki five blocks, containing 2,143 acres have been allotted to settlers, of whom thirty-three are at work on roads and drains, and in felling and preparing their lands for occupation and use. The total area felled and grassed is 344 acres.

In Wellington three farms are in operation, and two had been allotted to twenty-five settlers, all of whom were at work, and 1,288 acres have been felled and burned, of which 1,090 are grassed.

In Otago two new farms containing 2,518 acres have been set aside during the year, and others are now being arranged. These two farms have been allotted to sixteen settlers, who are now engaged in clearing the land and forming roads of access preparatory to settling.