

There were five forfeitures, of 1,208 acres, and four surrenders, of 1,674 acres 1 rood 18 perches, during the year. There were seventeen selectors in arrear on the 31st March, to the extent of £243 18s. 11d.

*Lease in Perpetuity.*—Under this system seventy-nine selectors selected 21,200 acres 2 roods 16 perches during the year, returning an annual rental of £1,022 17s. The 268 selectors who are now on the books hold 78,041 acres 1 rood 1 perch, and pay an annual rental of £3,378 19s. 9d. There were nine exchanges from other systems, which increase the area by 3,101 acres, and the annual rental by £121 1s. 4d. Fifteen selectors were in arrear at the end of the year, with payments amounting to £107 15s. 11d.

*Village-settlement Lands under Lease in Perpetuity.*—Under this heading twenty-one persons took up 260 acres 1 rood 13 perches, producing an annual rental of £37 7s. 8d. There were twenty-six forfeitures, representing an area of 1,039 acres and 1 perch. A gross area of 4,476 acres 1 rood 7 perches is now occupied under this system by 256 persons, the annual rental being £587 2s. 3d. Seventeen selectors were in arrear, with £25 18s. 9d. There were sixteen conversions, of 213 acres 2 roods 23 perches, from village-homestead-special-settlement system during the year.

*Village-homestead Special Settlements.*—There were only two selections, of 29 acres 2 roods 19 perches, made during the year, and these were made in terms of section 13 of "The Land Act Amendment Act, 1895," making a total of 139 selectors on the books, holding 1,698 acres and 29 perches, the annual rental and interest on advances amounting to £289 19s. 10d. The interests of two lessees in 41 acres and 14 perches were cancelled during the year, and the sixteen conversions referred to under the last heading were effected. No advances were made during the year, and consequently the total advances stand at the same amount as last year—viz., £6,561. The arrears of rent and interest on advances amounted to £120 3s., due by thirty-four selectors.

*Special Settlement Associations.*—This heading embraces the following systems: (a) Land selected on the deferred-payment system under special-settlement regulations of the 5th December, 1885; (b) farm-homestead associations on perpetual lease under the regulations of the 15th December, 1891 (both of which have been repealed); and (c) special settlement associations under sections 162, &c., of "The Land Act, 1892." There still remain under the first-named regulations—(a) 150 selectors, in fourteen associations, holding 14,884 acres 2 roods 26 perches. The total number of holders, including those who have acquired freehold titles, reported on as residing on the land is 265, and they occupy an area of 28,057 acres 3 roods 7 perches. There were seventy-six freehold titles acquired during the year, aggregating 7,685 acres 2 roods 39 perches, and there were only four persons in arrear with their instalments of rent, the amount being £17 1s. 11d. In last year's returns will be found 639 selectors, holding an area of 119,891 acres 1 rood 18 perches, in thirty-nine associations, under "The Land Act, 1892," (b) and (c). As the Marton No. 3 Association, comprising an area of 8,228 acres 3 roods 15 perches, was registered during the year, together with six other sections, comprising 1,009 acres 3 roods, being incomplete selections in blocks already taken up, the total number of selectors now on the books should be 686, holding 129,129 acres 3 roods 33 perches; but, as 105 forfeited or surrendered their interests in 21,192 acres 3 roods 24 perches during the year, the net results are 581 selectors and 107,937 acres and 9 perches remaining on the registers. 131 persons were in arrear with their payments, to the amount of £1,239 1s. 11d.

*Rangers' Reports.*—The Crown Lands Ranger on the West Coast reports with respect to the farm-homestead blocks in his district as follows:—

"Wanganui United West: The original members of this association were persons engaged in business or trade in Wanganui, who either surrendered their sections to the Crown or forfeited them. The consequence is, there are only two original members remaining, and it is very doubtful if one of these will hold his section much longer. The sections forfeited or surrendered are being readily taken up again by another class of settlers.

"Wanganui United East: There are four of the original body of selectors residing on their sections. They all seem to be doing fairly well, and are men apparently of some means. They have built comfortable houses, done a considerable amount of bushfelling and other improvements; they all speak hopefully of their prospects. Their cattle seem to do well in the bush, and to prefer the bush undergrowth to the grass, and come out of the bush in splendid condition. Several of the settlers complained of wild or Maori dogs killing their sheep.

"Clifton No. 1: I did not see much improvement in this association block which had been effected since my last visit a year ago. The settlers are, on the whole, a good class of men, and I feel sure this association will prove a success in time.

"Clifton No. 2: As the road-access to this association block is very bad there are only two settlers residing on their sections; but others have taken stock in to their grass, and some more bush has been felled this last season. I do not think more than five settlers will settle on their sections.

"Waimarino: Ten settlers are residing on their sections, and the others who are not residing have done improvements. They are all good men, and if they had some means would do well; as it is now they have to depend on the co-operative works to earn a little hard cash, and some of the settlers informed me that all their earnings went to pay store accounts. I mention some of the prices charged at the stores in Raetihi: Flour, 19s. 6d. per hundredweight.; sugar, 12s. 6d. per bag; oatmeal, 5s. 6d. per 25 lb. bag. These prices are at the stores, and it costs from 7s. 6d. to 15s. per pack-horse (each horse carrying 1½ cwt.) to take the stores to the settlers' homes. From this you will see that the settlers here have an uphill battle to fight, and I think these people are worthy of every consideration from the Government.

"Gladstone: I found only two original selectors residing; eight others have, however, done some improvements to their sections. I am sorry to say none of the settlers could burn their felled bush this season, owing to the unfavourable weather and the natural dampness of the ground. The