

In the matter of residence, seventy-eight were found to be defaulters, twenty-eight of whom have since been granted exemption for definite periods by the Land Board, and others have received notices to comply with the conditions.

In explanation of the somewhat large proportion of defaulters it may be mentioned that, generally speaking, these lands, which are for the most part hilly country only fit for grazing, have been selected by holders of small properties on the flats a few miles distant with the intention of improving and working them in conjunction with the homestead land; and where this has been made a plea for not residing the Board has always carefully considered the circumstances of each case, and in many instances has granted exemption. Were a little leniency not exercised in this manner it would mean crippling many a struggling resident on a restricted area; but, whilst the Board is desirous of assisting *bonâ fide* deserving cases, it is firm in its resolve to uphold the general principle of residence on selections wherever practicable.

*Arrears.*—The arrears at the end of the year amounted to £3,193 16s. 7d., mineral leases being accountable for £3,027 15s. 6d. of it. Of the 1,357 tenants, fifty-three are in arrear with their payments, thirty-four being holders of miscellaneous leases of reserves and small occupation licenses. To narrow it down still further, and to restrict the inquiry solely to holdings under ordinary settlement conditions, which number 677, we find that only nineteen of this number are in arrear, their total indebtedness amounting to the inconsiderable sum of £32 18s. 1d., which is very commendable and must be considered highly satisfactory; and of these, four have been granted extension of time to pay in, good reasons having been adduced for the non-payment.

*Revenue.*—The revenue received under the several headings was £18,275 13s. 10d., and exceeded the estimate by exactly £500; but a further sum of £1,482 10s. 3d. was paid to the Receiver of Land Revenue, Hokitika, that was received by the Crown Lands Ranger of Westland as royalties on 5,737,977 ft. of timber at the extreme southern end of this district, which sum has been placed in a Suspense Account in consequence of the timber having been obtained from forests within the Midland Railway area. £9,410 9s. of the first-mentioned sum accrued from endowments, £8,198 6s. 8d. of it as royalties on 327,932 tons of coal raised at the Coalbrookdale and Granity Creek Mines, in the Buller Coalfields Reserve, it thus becoming Westport Harbour Board revenue.

*Timber.*—The approximate quantity of timber on Crown lands, unsold, within the Nelson District is 8,000,000,000 ft.; on Native lands, 130,000,000 ft. The quantity sold but not yet operated on (all in mining reserves) is 60,000,000 ft. The export for the last three years was as follows: 1897, 9,000,000 ft.; 1898, 12,000,000 ft.; 1899, 15,500,000 ft. I desire to add that, of the estimated 8,000,000,000 ft. of timber still unsold on Crown lands, about half of it will be black- and red-birch, and it is unlikely that more than two-thirds of the total amount would be found available at the present time, on account of so much of it being scattered over rugged mountainous country. Forest fires, which do so much destruction, will materially lessen the amount that will be serviceable in years to come.

THOS. HUMPHRIES,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

## MARLBOROUGH.

The total area open for sale or selection during the year was 198,571 acres, classified as follows: Optional system, 6,864 acres; cash by auction, 2,510 acres; lease by auction and application, 927 acres; pastoral runs, 125,420 acres; small grazing-runs, 53,939 acres; and lease in perpetuity, 8,911 acres.

*Summary of Land taken up.*—197,358 acres was disposed of, the number of settlers being 159, an increase on last year of 145,534 acres and of sixty-two selectors.

*Cash Sales.*—1,656 acres was sold for cash to four purchasers.

*Deferred Payments.*—Two holdings of 214 acres were converted into freehold during the year. There are now only eight selectors under deferred payment, and four under village-settlement deferred payment, holding an area of 409 acres.

*Perpetual Lease.*—There are eleven selectors under this system, with an area of 1,615 acres.

*Occupation with Right of Purchase.*—Seven new selections were taken up during the year, the area being 2,713 acres. There was one exchange to lease in perpetuity of 400 acres. There are now thirty-two selectors under this heading, with an area of 9,883 acres.

*Lease in Perpetuity.*—Seventeen settlers selected 7,669 acres. There were also four exchanges from other tenures, comprising 2,300 acres. Total number of selectors 158, with an area of 76,324 acres.

*Mining Districts Land Occupation Act.*—Only one transaction; area, 61 acres.

*Village Settlements.*—There are twenty-six selectors, with an area of 434 acres. Eighteen selectors are resident; 289 acres are laid down in pasture or cultivated. The value of improvements is £1,949.

*Small Grazing-runs.*—52,422 acres was taken up by seventeen holders. This shows an increase on last year's transactions of 47,256 acres. The total number holding under this tenure is ninety-one, the area being 120,828 acres.

*Pastoral Runs.*—There were ten runs taken up; area, 121,937 acres. Three runs have expired, and two were exchanged for lease in perpetuity, the total area of the five runs being 118,350 acres. The total area now held is 880,242 acres, and the number of selectors seventy-nine.

*Miscellaneous Leases.*—Nineteen leases were issued, of an area of 1,034 acres, and there were two timber licenses granted.