

From this table it will be seen that the transactions show a decrease of sixty-three in number and 4,949 acres in area as compared with last year's figures. The total revenue also shows a decrease of £10,594, but next year this item will probably be augmented by the amount received on account of freehold titles of lands now held under the occupation-with-right-of-purchase system, the ten-years limit prior to tenants having the option of purchasing the freehold expiring in some cases before the 31st March next.

It will be noticed that the number of selectors now on the books has increased by 139, and the area held by over 35,000 acres.

An analysis of the revenue returns discloses the fact that a decrease has taken place in all the larger items with the exception of land for settlements, which shows an increase of £1,500, and small grazing-runs and improved farms, which are practically the same as last year. The largest decrease is, however, that of about £6,000 in the perpetual-lease system under "The Land Act, 1885."

Inspection of the table also shows that the rural holdings under the deferred-payment and perpetual-lease systems are steadily decreasing and merging into freeholds. There are only fourteen deferred-payment and sixty-seven perpetual-lease selections now on the books, and they also will at no distant date be extinguished. There are, in addition, ninety-four holdings under the perpetual-lease village homestead, and these will no doubt be converted into lease-in-perpetuity village homesteads under "The Land Act, 1892," owing probably to the lower rental charged and the easier conditions as to residence, thereby facilitating the securing of additional land.

Cash Sales.—The number of purchasers under this system was sixty, made up of forty-six town, eleven suburban, and three rural; and thirty-four perpetual-lease holders obtained their freehold titles, making with the other purchases a total of 14,265 acres acquired for cash.

Forfeitures, Surrenders, &c.—There were twenty forfeitures and surrenders, of a total area of 1,995 acres, as compared with twenty-nine during last year. Seventeen were forfeitures for non-compliance with the provisions of the Land Act, and three were voluntary surrenders by lessees. There were also two forfeitures of Native township leases, and one miscellaneous lease expired.

Arrears.—At the 31st March there were 269 selectors in arrear with more than one payment, to the amount of £3,108 17s. 3d., as compared with 224 selectors in arrear last year, with £2,431. This shows an increase of forty-five selectors and £677.

Reservations.—In compliance with the provisions of the Land Act and other enactments, an area of 7,526 acres and 31 perches was set aside and reserved for State forest, and scenery-preservation reserves. The total area formally gazetted under this head amounts to 7,371 acres, contained in seven sections. There is, in addition, a large area awaiting completion of surveys and final sanction before being gazetted. The preservation, care, and utilisation of these reservations continues to be of vital interest and importance.

The Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Acts.—Under these Acts 3,031 tenants were allowed discounts on rent, amounting to a sum of £2,161 19s. 7d.

CONDITION AND PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENTS.

From the report of the Crown Lands Ranger of the East Coast District it appears that he and an assistant effected 1,080 inspections, covering an area of 169,594 acres. The value of settlers' improvements amounted to £93,225, whereas only £43,429 need have been spent by the selectors to comply with the Land Act. He reports that there were sixty-six selectors in default—thirteen as to improvements, forty-two for non-residence, and eleven from other causes. The Crown Lands Ranger for the West Coast, with an assistant Ranger, inspected 644 holdings, of a total area of 86,207 acres, and reports 116 defaulters, fifty-four as to improvements and sixty-two for non-residence. The value of settlers' improvements amounted to £122,141, and the amount that was actually required to be spent was £59,014. The total Ranger's inspections amounted to 1,724, with an area of 255,801 acres; value of improvements, £215,366; and 182 defaulters.

The Crown Land Rangers for the East Coast report as follows:—

Village Settlements.

During the year Makuri, Upper Makuri, Ngaturi, Rakaunui, and Pongaroa Village Settlements were inspected. From detailed reports attached hereto it will be seen selectors in the settlements named have effected improvements to the value of £3,811 in excess of the requirements. Some of the older settlements, viz., Pahiatua, Pahiatua West, Mangatainoka, Mangaramarama, and Hastwell, have been inspected for the tenth year. The remainder I propose visiting this coming winter. The most noticeable feature in connection with the village settlements is the almost universal desire of the settlers to increase the areas of their holdings, due to some extent to the present activity of the dairy industry.

Improvements throughout the whole of the village settlements continue satisfactory, and will compare favourably with other systems. The improvements required amounted to £5,730, but they were effected to the value of £32,114, or £26,384 in excess of requirements.

Of 223 selectors required to reside, 204 are residing; the non-residents have been accounted for in various reports, and in most cases the Land Board has extended the time. The number of souls on the land is 876, against 932 last year, or a reduction of fifty-six. This, to some extent, is owing to the sections being grouped, and in some cases to the grown-up members of families taking up other land, or being engaged elsewhere.

Makuri.—Area, 151 acres, divided into eighteen sections held by thirteen selectors, five of whom hold two sections each. The areas range from 5 to 18 acres, and average about 11½ acres each. Ten married men with families and two single men are residing. Improvements: Required, £166; effected, £2,300; surplus, £2,134. The land, with the exception of