

Coming to the results for the twelve months ended 31st March last, there is on settlement conditions a total of 1,577 selections, covering 317,932 acres, being a greater area than ever was taken up in any one year before. Nearly one-half the area is in small grazing-runs, and that is the main cause of the increase. The number of selections is also the greatest with the exception of the previous year, when the number was 2,424. In both years the increase of selectors is due to the special-settlement and village-homestead systems. There has been a considerable falling-off in the number of the ordinary deferred-payment selections, and a corresponding increase in the selections on perpetual lease; so that, taking the two systems together, about the usual average has been maintained, notwithstanding the fact that during the latter part of the year the most available lands were withheld pending the bringing into force of the new system of the Land Act of 1887.

The details of the year's operations are set forth in the tables appended; but the following summary gives the general results in a succinct form:—

Land sold on immediate payments—

	A.	R.	P.	Purchasers.	Scrip.	Cash received.
					£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Town ...	57	2	1	114		
Village small farm ...	66	0	36	68		
Suburban ...	274	3	35	90	43 0 0	24,271 7 10
Rural ...	28,229	2	30	350		

Land sold on deferred payments—

	Acres.	Selectors.			
Rural ...	41,100	319	Instalments from these and from former selections still current		
Special settlements ...	31,740	309			
Village small farm ...	1,316	147			65,618 15 7
Agricultural leases on goldfields—					
1,222 acres, leased to 15 selectors—rents from these and from selections current from former years					1,434 19 7
Perpetual leases—					
71,966 acres, leased to 349 selectors—rents from these and from selections of former years					8,759 16 7
Small areas under section 161 of "The Land Act, 1885"—					
435 acres, to 18 selectors					98 15 7
Village-homestead settlements—					
9,451 acres, to 309 selectors					739 11 8
Homestead—					
4,220 acres, to 28 selectors					
Small grazing-runs—					
156,482 acres, to 83 selectors—rents from these and from former selections					5,614 12 5
Pastoral rents—					
From 10,755,483 acres, held in 1,253 leases					157,058 18 4
Miscellaneous—					
Coal and mineral leases, timber-licenses, &c., about					11,187 0 0
Total ...					£274,783 17 7

LAND SOLD.

There was very little Crown land sold for cash last year. Large areas were and still are withheld for the Midland Railway and otherwise, and what was available was nearly all proclaimed as only open for application under settlement conditions. The Land Act of 1887, by giving the settler the option of purchase over extensive areas, will certainly induce to some extent purchases on freehold tenure, although, as already pointed out, the perpetual-lease system with right of pre-emption is likely to be popular with settlers, for it is virtually a freehold tenure, the Government advancing the purchase-money at 5 per cent. interest.

RESERVES.

For the twelve months ended the 31st March, 1888, 280 reserves, covering 30,496 acres, were gazetted for the following public purposes:—

	A.	R.	P.
37 reserves for endowment of primary education ...	21,664	2	35
24 reserves for municipal purposes ...	56	3	10
26 reserves for recreation ...	1,496	0	7
193 reserves for miscellaneous ...	7,278	2	1
Total ...	30,496	0	13

There were also 20 forest reserves, containing 43,767 acres, proclaimed during the year. This, with what was proclaimed before, brings up the State forests reserves to a total area of 1,384,503 acres.

SETTLEMENT CONDITIONS.

These have been made considerably easier for settlers by the Act of 1887. Thus, freehold, of deferred-payment, or perpetual-lease lands may be acquired as soon as the prescribed improvements of the Act of 1885 are effected. Formerly the freehold could not be acquired under six years, and in the perpetual-lease tenure, if the opportunity of purchase was not availed of before the twelfth year from the date of the lease, the right lapsed; now there is no restriction as to time, nor is there any bar to purchase perpetual-lease lands within a mining district, provided mining interests are not affected. Again, any holder of bush-land on deferred payment is exempt from the residence