

large amount of time occupied in attending to the public, in answering endless inquiries, and affording information to applicants for land.

In conclusion, I may state that the officers have been very fully occupied during the year, work after hours having been a frequent necessity; and it is gratifying to me to be able to report that one and all have performed their several duties with credit to themselves and satisfaction to myself and the department.

J. P. MAITLAND,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

SOUTHLAND.

Table A.—The figures in connection with Southland transactions are furnished to enable you to complete the general return for the colony.

Table B gives an analysis of the holdings taken up during the year under review.

Table C furnishes the cash transactions, which show a marked increase over those of last year, the number of purchasers being forty-nine, as compared with twenty-three, and the amount received being £5,431 16s. 8d., as against £802 4s. 2d.

Table D.—Deferred-payment transactions continue to emphasize the tendency of late years to neglect this for other systems, only thirteen selections, aggregating 1,912 acres, averaging 147 acres each, having been made, as against twenty selections, of 2,032 acres, averaging 102 acres, for the previous year. Nine forfeitures have taken place, representing 979 acres, and fifty-six selectors have acquired freeholds aggregating 7,062 acres, leaving 64,245 acres held under this system on the 31st March last, being 6,129 acres less than at the same period last year. Six selectors availed themselves of capitalisation, under which their annual payments will amount to £21 7s. The total number of selectors is now 381, as against 433 last year.

Table E.—Sixty-nine selectors took up 20,140 acres under perpetual lease, being almost exactly double the quantity selected last year. The number of selectors is 224, as against 172 for the previous period, when 10,269 acres were taken up, showing that a considerable increase has taken place in average size of sections. The average upset rent per acre was 8·5d., as against 9d. last year. Fifteen forfeitures, aggregating 4,478 acres, were declared for various breaches of conditions. The total area now held under this system is 56,485 acres. Only two freeholds were acquired during the year, the area being 172 acres.

Table F.—Under agricultural lease there is only one transaction to record—viz., the receipt of the annual rental on an area of 18 acres.

Table G.—Cash village transactions continue to be unimportant, the total for the year being ten selections, of 43 acres odd, for £110, being slightly more in area, but less in value, than those of last year.

Table H.—Of deferred-payment village lands, eight selectors took up 87 acres, for which a sum of £26 0s. 1d. of annual instalments was paid; and four selections, aggregating 108 acres, carrying annual instalments of £42 3s. 4d., were declared forfeited. One hundred and five selectors now hold 1,530 acres under this system.

Table I.—Of perpetual-lease village lands thirty-five holdings were selected, representing 451 acres, the annual rent payable being £58 15s. 10d., and the amount actually received being £29 7s. 11d. Only one forfeiture took place. Seventy-two selectors now hold 1,073 acres under this system.

Table J.—Under the village-homestead system eight selections took place, aggregating 58 acres, the average area to each selector being $7\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and the average rental being 2s. 7d. per acre. Only two forfeitures were declared. Thirty-four selectors were in arrears with rent and interest £34 9s. 4d. and £15 4s. 9d. respectively. The amount advanced for houses and bush-felling remains, as at last year, at £1,074 3s. 5d.

Tables K, L, and M.—There are no transactions to record under these tables.

Table N.—Twenty-two pastoral licenses have been issued during the year, for 164,165 acres; but out of this number sixteen are for runs which, as the licenses expire on the 1st March, 1893, were offered for sale at auction on the 31st March last, when all were secured by the former licensees, although in some cases at considerable advances of rental. Twenty-eight runs or portions of runs which were classified at the same time as those referred to above were not again offered for lease, but will be more or less subdivided, and offered to the public either under settlement conditions or as small grazing-runs under Part VII. of the Land Act of 1885, a class of tenure for which there is at present a considerable demand. One hundred and thirty-two licensees now hold 1,366,558 acres, or an average of 10,352 acres each. I should add that the runs which were relet on the 31st March last were leased for an absolute term of ten years without right of resumption on the part of the Crown.

Table O.—Of miscellaneous leases and licenses 102 were let for coal and mineral, and twenty-four for grazing and other purposes; there is a total of 307 leases and licenses now current. The total annual rentals payable under these is £837 13s. 9d., of which £351 5s. 5d. is in arrears.

Table P gives particulars of land and territorial revenue, the amounts being £12,597 3s. 6d. and £8,159 12s. 5d. respectively, or a total of £20,756 15s. 11d. for the year, exclusive of endowments.

Table Q shows the arrears due to the Crown on the 31st March last by 466 selectors, representing 58,880 acres, to be £2,108 6s. 10d. I regret to find that these figures show an increase over those of last year, when they stood thus: 56,084 acres, 298 selectors, and £1,523 13s. 11d. The only remedy for this state of things is to have more clerical assistance in the Land Office, so that those in arrear may be promptly requested to pay up, and, failing this, to declare their holdings forfeited unless good reason is shown for the default.