

for the purpose of preservation of the native fauna and flora. The reservation for domain purposes comprises a belt of a mile wide along the Wanganui River wherever there are Crown lands. The purpose of this reservation is to preserve the beautiful scenery of that river for ever.

The following figures show the transactions under the head of endowments which have been dealt with by the department :—

	No. of Purchasers.	Area. Acres.	Consideration (Past and Current). £
Cash lands	9	20,104	308
Deferred payment	Nil	Nil	5,713
Perpetual lease	2	642	1,496
Lease in perpetuity	1	1,419	21
Village homestead	Nil	Nil	4
Small grazing-runs	7	10,780	443
Pastoral runs	Nil	Nil	1,063
Coal and mineral and other leases	...	...	10,584
Timber and other leases	...	...	1,350
Rent of reserves	...	...	355
			£21,353

The revenue collected by the department is shown in detail in Table R. The following is the summary :—

	£
Land revenue	114,717
Territorial revenue	188,137
Other revenue, deposits, &c.	7,668
Endowments	21,353
	£332,100

The Treasury figures, after taking into account refunds, endowments, deposits, &c., are—Land revenue, £110,355; territorial, £190,319.

SPECIAL-SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATIONS AND VILLAGE HOMESTEAD LANDS.

It will be remembered that last year's report stated that a large number of applications had been received from associations of persons desirous of taking up lands together under the regulations then existing, but that, owing to the surveys not having been then completed, the particulars could not be shown in the year's return. Since then a good many of the blocks have been allotted to the settlers, whilst in other cases the lands have been surveyed, but not in time for the result of the ballots to be returned prior to the 31st March. The number of selections that were completed and lands allotted up to the 31st March was 838, the area selected being 157,381 acres. Twenty-two of these association blocks are in the Wellington, five in Taranaki, and one in Hawke's Bay Districts. There were twenty-nine association blocks in addition, covering an area of 192,440 acres, proclaimed during the past twelve months, the surveys of the most of which are in hand, but the details will only appear in next year's returns.

These selections average 200 acres each. Some of the settlers are already on their sections and have commenced clearing, others are engaged in roadworks leading to their lands. It is anticipated that a considerable area of bush will be felled this season on these association blocks. The older special settlements, particulars of which will also be found in Table M, call for no special remark. Great progress has been made in many of them, but barely one-fifth of those who took up lands in these settlements are residing at the present time; residence can be avoided if double the amount of improvements are made.

Reference should be made to the report of the Superintendent of Village Settlements, given in the Appendix hereto, for particulars as to the progress of the village homestead selectors. The number of new selectors during the year was forty-two, who took up 541 acres, or an average of twelve acres each; at the same time, the holdings of thirty-five settlers were forfeited for non-compliance with the conditions. The total number of these selectors is now 900, holding 22,677 acres, on which a sum of £24,625 has been advanced, or a little over £1 an acre on the total area. Some interesting remarks as to this class of settlement will be found in the extracts from the Commissioners' reports attached. Considering the character of the country which remains in the hands of the Crown, the increase in the size of holding authorised by the Act of 1892, which may now be selected under this system—100 acres instead of 50—is likely to prove beneficial in many parts of the colony.

SETTLEMENT CONDITIONS, FORFEITURES, ETC.

A reference to Table U at the end of this report will show that there are 13,225 selectors on the books of the department holding Crown lands, out of which 11,214 are selectors whose holdings have to be inspected from time to time to insure that the conditions under which the lands are held are complied with. In order that this work may be accomplished, the department employs nineteen officers—Crown Land Rangers and Forest Rangers, with occasional assistance from other officers—and in most of the districts the work of inspection is well up to date. This has not been the case for some time past, owing principally to the extra work thrown on the Rangers by the Selectors Lands Revaluation Acts. The Commissioners' reports give satisfactory evidence that the amount of improvements are very generally far in excess of the amount demanded by law. The law relating to improvements was considerably simplified by the Act of 1892, and it will be found in future practice that several advantages and a considerable saving of time will result therefrom, the more so as improvements under all tenures except small grazing-runs are now identical.

The forfeitures for breach of conditions (in which are included a few surrenders) amounted to 194 selections, containing 31,989 acres, being thirty-eight in number, and 10,393 acres in area, less