

in an annual rental of £543 2s. The Crown Lands Ranger reports on this settlement as follows: "Improvements have been effected to the value of £1,330 5s. Sixteen selectors are residing, and four are non-resident. Eleven dwelling-houses have been erected, eight artesian wells put down, 228 chains of fencing erected, and 91 acres are now under root-crops, and looking very well. The four non-resident selectors have improved their sections, and probably when the first year's inspection is due, in May next, they will have taken up their residence on the land. On all the occupied sections I noticed the settlers had a few head of cattle or sheep. The settlers are satisfied with their holdings, and are under the impression that they will get on well." The amount of insurance effected on houses, &c., is £950. This settlement shows a very satisfactory progress.

Elsthorpe Settlement was taken up this year by thirty-nine selectors, thirty-four of whom are now in occupation, holding 9,456 acres 2 roods 2 perches, at an annual rental of £2,269 7s. The Ranger inspected the settlement on the 18th March, and reports as follows: "On the rural sections classed as 'agricultural land' I found that improvements had been effected to the value of £1,833 10s. All the sections under this heading have been operated upon with the exception of three, one of which is forfeited, the others neither being occupied nor improved. Twenty selectors are residing, twelve houses have been erected, and the timber is on the ground ready to erect others before the winter. Of the six sections taken up under the village-homestead system, two selectors are residing, three are non-resident, and one has surrendered his section. The three village sections selected are neither occupied nor improved. The total value of improvements effected on the settlement is £1,851 10s. Generally, the progress of the settlement is satisfactory, and the settlers are hopeful of the future."

Waimarie Settlement (Poverty Bay): All the sections in this settlement, with the exception of one containing 25 acres and 19 perches, have been selected, there being seventeen selectors, holding 400 acres 2 roods 35 perches, at an annual rental of £435 10s. This settlement was only open for selection in September last, so that the settlers have only been in occupation for six months. The Ranger has inspected the settlement, and from his report I obtain the following information: The total value of improvements effected is £466 17s. 9d.; eight selectors are residing, and nine are non-resident; seven houses have been erected, and two are being erected; 64½ acres are under crop, principally maize; 296 chains of fencing have been put up, but the Ranger points out that they are not legal fences. Generally, the settlement may be considered to be making fair progress. The section of 25 acres not selected has been let on a temporary lease.

On the 21st of April next the Pouparae Settlement, of 336 acres, will be offered for selection. This is a fine estate, situated six miles and a quarter from the Town of Gisborne, and I have no doubt that all the sections will be taken up.

Lands available for Settlement.—At present we have about 352,000 acres available for settlement, as well as 61,917 acres of small grazing and pastoral runs. A large area of this is returned as broken forest-country, which cannot be taken up until opened up by roads. During this year I hope to have ready for settlement 46,414 acres lately awarded the Crown in the Ngapaeruru, Waikopiro, and Tiratu Blocks, as well as a portion of the Tamaki Block. There are also some 4,000 acres in the Norsewood district under survey for settlement. All this area is suitable for settlement, and should be readily taken up. We shall also open the Pouparae Settlement, of 336 acres, under the Land for Settlements Acts, so there is every prospect of the number of our tenants being considerably increased during the year.

ERIC C. GOLD-SMITH,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

TARANAKI.

Land open for Selection.—The area open for selection comprises 32,000 acres of rough broken country (Rawhitiroa Block), covered with bush, and accessible at present by the Rawhitiroa Road at its south-western corner only. No applications have been received since the land was opened for selection as small grazing-runs in October last. The balance consists of 10,460 acres unsurveyed land to the east of the Patea and Whenuakura Rivers and up to the confiscation line, about 6,000 acres of the Taumatamahoe Block adjacent to the Ohura Road, as well as some scattered sections, and lands forfeited and opened for selection again.

Lands opened for Sale or Selection.—The land opened for selection on the optional system comprised the portion of the Taumatamahoe Block before mentioned, and about 16,000 acres of sections in various parts of the district, mostly forfeited sections in special settlements, only a few of which have as yet been taken up. Lands offered for cash by auction were in Town of Stratford, Villages of Purangi and Tongaporutu. Only one section in Purangi was sold. The lands offered as small grazing-runs were one forfeited run and the Rawhitiroa Block before described.

Area of Bush felled.—These items in the returns are estimated only, as we have no means of arriving at a correct statement of the area felled on lands sold by the Crown since the commencement of the settlement of the colony.

Summary of Lands taken up.—The total area selected on the optional system falls short of last year's selections by about 1,800 acres, and there is a considerable decrease in the lands applied for under the improved-farm settlement system, there having been over 13,000 acres less than last year. The selections are mostly forfeited sections reallocated. The area returned for special settlement comprises the Moeawatea Association, which is the last one in this district to be balloted for. The lands taken up for cash were sections in Stratford, Tongaporutu, and Purangi sold by auction, and some outlying pieces of waste land sold under section 117 of "The Land Act, 1892." One village section in Matapouri was selected on lease in perpetuity, and one forfeited small grazing-run in Opaku district. The total revenue received from lands selected during the year, inclusive of miscellaneous leases, was £641 8s. 10d.