

by Rangers Hughan and Atkinson as to the fulfilment of conditions of residence and improvements on ordinary Crown lands, together with special reports on the Swinburn Farm Homestead Association's Block, and the several estates under the Land for Settlements Acts. There is, upon the whole, cause for general satisfaction at the manner in which the large majority of Crown tenants are discharging their obligations under their respective leases and licenses. The Land Board has had in a few instances to require tenants to show cause why their holdings should not be declared forfeited for breach of conditions, and in a few cases holdings have been forfeited either for total abandonment, non-payment of rent, or other default. In the majority of cases, however, the inquiry has acted as a spur to the flagging energies of the selectors, and been the means of causing them to effect a proper compliance with the conditions under which their lands are held.

*Improved-farm Settlements.*—No further improved-farm settlements have been proclaimed in this district during the year. The tables giving the transactions under this head show that an additional area of 1,645 acres 2 roods 30 perches has been allotted to eleven selectors, and that an additional sum of £2,919 6s. 3d. has been expended by Government for improvements on these lands. Up to the present there has not been in any of the settlements a cessation of the expenditure of Government money in the way of improvements, and consequently the annual rentals have not been in any case finally adjusted. Possibly this may be done in most of the settlements during the course of the present year. The Chief Surveyor, who has the oversight of these settlements, informs me that he has at your request furnished a detailed report in respect of each settlement.

*The Land for Settlements Act.*—The following new estates were dealt with during the year under the Land for Settlements Act:—

(1.) Ardgowan Estate: Area acquired, 4,245 acres and 9 perches; area for selection, 4,162 acres 3 roods 4 perches, in sixty-five allotments; opened for selection on 12th May, 1896.

(2.) Makareao Estate: Area purchased, 2,367 acres 3 roods 31 perches; area for selection on lease in perpetuity, 893 acres and 33 perches; as small grazing-run, 1,214 acres 2 roods 3 perches, an area of 298 acres and 21 perches being reserved for limestone quarry, railway, and other purposes; opened for selection, 26th June, 1896.

Taking the estates in the order in which they appear, I have to offer the following brief remarks thereon:—

(1.) Pomahaka Estate: Five additional allotments, having an area of 1,132 acres 2 roods 2 perches, were taken up on this estate during the year, and a further allotment of 271 acres 3 roods 20 perches has been selected since the beginning of the present financial year. The settlers on the estate have just harvested a very favourable crop, the yield of oats in some instances being as much as 40 bushels an acre. The total value of improvements effected by selectors to 31st March was £2,180, while there has been cultivated during the year for oats 1,105 acres, and for root-crops 1,028 acres; total, 2,133 acres. I am in hopes that the remainder of the estate will shortly be applied for. At the end of the financial year there were twenty selectors on the estate, holding 4,974 acres 2 roods 24 perches, at an annual rental of £846 14s. 6d. There are besides two areas amounting to 326 acres 1 rood let on temporary license for grazing purposes, at an annual rental of £6. Total receipts during the year, £481 10s. 7d.

(2.) Teanaraki Estate: A previously-forfeited holding of 5 acres and 2 perches has been again taken up, the whole of the estate—344 acres 1 rood 25 perches—being now occupied by twenty-three selectors, at an annual rental of £281 9s. 6d. The total value of the improvements effected by the lessees on this estate to date is £1,022, and there has been cultivated during the year—for oats, 97 acres; wheat, 94 acres; and root-crops, 26 acres: total, 217 acres. Total receipts during the year, £289 3s. 9d.

(3.) Tahawai Estate: This estate, of 68 acres 2 roods 14 perches, remains occupied by eight selectors, at an annual rental of £35 14s. 4d. Value of improvements effected by settlers, £616; previously on the land, £25: total, £641. Cultivation during the year, 10 acres in root-crops. Receipts, £35 3s. 7d.

(4.) Maerewhenua Estate: Two small allotments, with an acreage of 19 acres 3 roods 20 perches, have been taken up on this estate during the year, while four, with an acreage of 195 acres 1 rood 33 perches have been surrendered and forfeited, and there now remains to be taken up in five allotments an area of 190 acres 3 roods 20 perches. There were on the estate at the 31st March sixty-eight tenants, holding 10,722 acres 2 roods 8 perches, at an annual rental of £3,520 0s. 8d., and, in addition, three areas of reserves were occupied under temporary licenses over 22 acres 3 roods 36 perches, at an annual rental of £3 2s. 6d. The prospects of this settlement are encouraging, and there have been excellent crops taken off the land at the recent harvest. The total value of improvements effected by lessees amounts to £4,876 10s., the value of those on the land when selected being £2,701 5s. 9d.; making a total value of £7,577 15s. 9d. The cultivation during the season has been—for oats, 1,179 acres; wheat, 3,139 acres; root-crops, 458 acres: total, 4,776 acres. Total receipts during the year, £3,428 9s. 1d.

(5.) Puketapu Estate: This estate, of 496 acres and 36 perches, is held by twelve lessees, at an annual rental of £189 7s. 4d. Improvements effected by selectors, £224; on the land previous to selection, £246 8s. 7d.: total, £470 8s. 7d. Cultivation during the season—oats, 40 acres; wheat, 19 acres: root-crops, 40 acres: total, 99 acres. Receipts during the year, £94 14s. 2d.

(6.) Ardgowan Estate: The whole of this estate, of 4,162 acres 3 roods 4 perches, which was opened for selection on 12th May, 1896, has been taken up, being now occupied by sixty-five selectors, at an annual rental of £1,893 2s. 8d. In addition, five areas of reserves, &c., over 20 acres 3 roods 37 perches, are occupied under temporary licenses, at a rental of £12 1s. 10d. per annum. Improvements have been effected by tenants during the year to the value of £2,659, there having been on the land previous to selection improvements valued at £1,688 19s. 1½d.; total, £4,347 19s. 1½d. There has been cultivated—for oats, 551 acres; wheat, 850 acres; and for root-