

AREA of CROWN LANDS available for SETTLEMENT, 31st March, 1899.

County.	System.	Area (First Class).			Area (Second Class).			Total Area.		
		A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.
Geraldine	Village lots	1	1	0	...	...	...	1	1	0
Ashburton	Village homestead	71	2	0	...	...	...	128	1	3
Geraldine	"	36	3	3	...	...	...			
Waimate	"	20	0	0	...	...	...			
Selwyn	Rural lands under Part III., " Land Act, 1892 "	282	0	30	...	...	...			
Ashburton	Ditto	278	0	34	1,413	2	11	3,646	0	9
Geraldine	"	5	0	36	659	3	18			
Mackenzie	"	...	...	...	990	0	0			
Waimate	"	...	...	...	17	0	0			
"	Small grazing-runs	...	...	...	2,331	0	0	2,331	0	0
Selwyn	Land for settlement	7	1	4	...	...	...			
Ashburton	"	39	0	0	...	...	...	5,465	1	29
Waimate	"	5,419	0	25	...	...	...			
Totals	...	6,160	2	12	5,411	1	29	11,572	0	1

Departmental.—During the year thirty-five ordinary and special meetings of the Land Board have been held, and the steady increase in the number of permanent tenants tends to correspondingly enlarge the number of questions which have to be dealt with by the Board at its fortnightly meetings. The number of statutory applications lodged for lands offered for selection was 1,003, of which 216 were granted. The following approximate figures will serve to represent in part the amount of clerical work passed through the offices: Letters received and despatched, 18,350, including ordinary recorded correspondence and rent notices; about 8,500 lithographs and sale-plans distributed; 950 vouchers dealing with an expenditure of about £18,500, and 650 cheques representing an imprest account of £5,500, were passed through the Accountant's Office. In the Receiver of Land Revenue's Office, besides the revenue actually received, a sum of £57,698 12s. 5d. was passed through the Deposit Account, and 4,832 receipts given for payments, &c.

SIDNEY WEETMAN,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

OTAGO.

Revenue.—The estimated gross amount of receipts for the year, including land for settlements, was £66,883 18s. 9d. The amount realised is £68,762 9s. 2d., there being a surplus over the estimates of £1,878 10s. 5d. Divided into ordinary Crown lands, lands for settlements, and endowments, the estimated and actual receipts were as follows: Crown lands—Estimate, £53,602; receipts, £58,132 0s. 7d.; surplus, £4,530 0s. 7d. Land for settlements—Estimate, £11,901 18s. 9d.; receipts, £9,249 17s. 3d.; deficiency, £2,652 1s. 6d. Endowments—Estimate, £1,380; receipts, £1,380 11s. 4d.; surplus, 11s. 4d. Totals—Estimate, £66,883 18s. 9d.; receipts, £68,762 9s. 2d.; surplus, £1,878 10s. 5d.

As compared with the previous year, last year's receipts are greater by the sum of £1,010 13s. 1d. Next year a shrinkage in revenue for several reasons be expected, unless further estates are acquired under the Land for Settlements Act, as, for instance, the lessening of rental by exchanges from the perpetual-lease system to the lease-in-perpetuity system; the lowering of the capital value in a large number of cases of surrendered and forfeited lands; and the gradually diminishing value of pastoral lands by the rabbit-pest and curtailment of wintering country. The gross annual rental of all classes of tenure at 31st March, 1898, was £67,167 10s. 8d., and at 31st March last, £64,822 10s. 5d., or £2,345 0s. 3d. less at the latter than the former date. The surplus in Crown lands from last year's receipts was chiefly in cash, perpetual-lease lands made freehold, and deferred payments. The deficiency in land for settlements must be attributable to the fact that, in consequence of the previous season having been so unfavourable, many of the lessees got behind in their payments, and, though the present season has been much more favourable, many selectors had not been able to realise upon their crops in time to pay their rents before the close of the financial year. On some of the estates, too, in the northern district, even this year, many promising crops were blasted by hot winds at an early stage of their growth, so that the harvest where that has happened has been less satisfactory in its results than was at first expected.

Summary of Transactions.—The following abstract of the year's transactions in tabular form is made up in the usual manner, and shows, when compared with that of the previous year, that the number of transactions are less by fifty-four, the area dealt with greater by 16,785 acres, while the total area held is shown to be less this year than last by thirty-nine selectors and 91,911 acres. This diminution is accounted for by the fact that a large number of selectors have either surrendered their holdings or allowed them to be forfeited in order that the land might be reopened at reduced rentals, there not having been sufficient time to admit of such surrendered or forfeited lands being reopened and again taken up before the close of the financial period.