

split and saw timber held during the year is as follows: Sawmill licenses—Seven holders; area, 1,342½ acres; royalty paid, £224 6s. 6d. Hand-splitting licenses—Thirteen holders; area, 2,075 acres; fees paid, £145 0s. 6d.

*Rebate of Rent to Crown Tenants.*—During the year a sum of £3,952 6s. 2d. has been granted by way of rebates on 1,202 leases or licenses, on which the rents were paid within one month after due date. The following are the numbers under each tenure: Deferred payment, 9 licenses; ordinary perpetual leases, 48; village-homestead leases in perpetuity, 223; leases in perpetuity, all classes, 907; occupation-with-right-of-purchase licenses, 15.

*Crown Lands Rangers' Reports.*—The reports furnished by the Rangers on settlement holdings of all classes throughout the district disclose a very satisfactory compliance in the majority of cases. The number of defaulters forms a very small proportion of the whole, and in very few of these cases is the default of a serious character. The small village holders generally have prospered well, a sufficient amount of outside employment having been obtainable. The extension of the dairy industry and the establishment in various districts of creameries connected with central factories is also of considerable benefit to many tenants. The extremely dry weather experienced at the beginning of the season, and in South Canterbury the protracted wet weather and floods at harvest-time, have, of course, reduced the crop-yields, and given to some settlers but a poor return for their year's labour on their holdings. In a few cases valuable improvements have been swept away or much damaged by floods, and the holders will suffer for some time from the losses which they have sustained. Speaking generally, however, land-settlement throughout the district is in a prosperous condition; tenants have made comfortable homes, and are fulfilling the requirements of their leases well. Frequent complaint is made by small holders of the insufficiency of their holdings, and in some cases, either by reason of remoteness of locality or inferiority of soil, these complaints are undoubtedly justified; but it is often difficult to remove the cause of complaint, there being sometimes no land available for the purpose, while in other cases to permit the amalgamation of holdings by transfer would defeat the purpose for which the settlements were established. Cases are not infrequent in which a lessee does sufficiently well on a small holding to enable him to sell out and acquire a larger area elsewhere, thus showing that one of the objects for which small holdings were established is being attained. In addition to their statutory inspections, a large number of miscellaneous inspections of a varied character have been performed by both Rangers.

*Crown Lands for Disposal, 1902-3.*—The following is a table of Crown lands available for selection on the 31st March, 1902:—

CROWN LANDS IN CANTERBURY LAND DISTRICT OPEN FOR SELECTION ON THE 31ST MARCH, 1902.

| Tenure under which Land is open.                                | Area. |    |    | Counties in which situated.            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----|----|----------------------------------------|
|                                                                 | A.    | R. | P. |                                        |
| Village allotments ... ..                                       | 0     | 2  | 0  | Geraldine.                             |
| Village-homestead allotments ... ..                             | 112   | 3  | 35 | Ashburton and Geraldine.               |
| Optional selection, under Part III. of<br>"The Land Act, 1892"— |       |    |    |                                        |
| First-class surveyed ... ..                                     | 197   | 0  | 28 | "                                      |
| Second-class " ... ..                                           | 1,396 | 3  | 5  | Selwyn, Ashburton, Geraldine, Waimate. |
| First-class unsurveyed ... ..                                   | 481   | 0  | 0  | Selwyn and Ashburton.                  |
| Second-class " ... ..                                           | 370   | 0  | 0  | Ashburton.                             |
| Small grazing-runs ... ..                                       | 2,331 | 0  | 0  | Waimate.                               |
| Land for Settlements Acts ... ..                                | 94    | 1  | 32 | Selwyn, Ashburton, Geraldine, Waimate. |
| Total ... ..                                                    | 4,983 | 3  | 20 |                                        |

Exclusive of areas which may be acquired and disposed of under the Land for Settlements Acts, there will be available for disposal an area of 8,026 acres of light plain land, situated near Oxford, at present comprised in three pastoral runs, the licenses of which will expire on the 28th February, 1903. A portion of this will probably be required to extend the holdings of settlers in the neighbouring View Hill Village Settlement, who are at present occupying small areas insufficient for their maintenance.

The licenses of a number of pastoral runs, which were leased in 1890 for a period of fourteen years, will expire on February, 1904, and must by law be reoffered one year before the expiration of existing licenses. The redisposal will therefore fall within the coming year. The total number of these runs is twenty-six, comprising an area of 536,612 acres, at present held at an annual rental of £8,916 12s. 8d.

Under the Land for Settlements Acts a total area of 17,393 acres, in three estates, has been acquired and prepared for disposal, and will be offered in April and May.

*Departmental.*—During the year thirty-one ordinary and special meetings of the Land Board have been held, including three special meetings at Timaru, in connection with the disposal of acquired lands. The number of statutory applications for land lodged and considered was 357, of which ninety-seven were granted. The dealing with these applications, however, now constitutes a very small proportion of the business of the Land Board compared with the number of transfers, Rangers' reports, &c., dealt with at each meeting.

The following approximate figures will serve to show in part the amount of work passed through the office: Recorded inward and outward correspondence, rent notices, circulars, returns