

CHEVIOT ESTATE.

The permanently residing population is now approximately 1,030 souls. The value of improvements effected is estimated at £126,298; area in crop, about 7,300 acres. The Cheviot lands are now benefiting by the advent of the railway, which is enhancing the unimproved value of the holdings. The holders of small areas are dairying, and using the railway to convey the produce to the factories further down the line. The Cheviot Settlement is prosperous.

DEPARTMENTAL.

The total number of ordinary meetings of the Land Board was thirteen, and there were thirteen special meetings held during the year. The number of imprest vouchers was 497, covering £4,401 10s., and the pre-audit vouchers amounted to 485, amounting to £34,549 17s. 9d., the total being 955, for £38,951 7s. 9d.

The office staff has been kept busy in disposing of the large number of settlements, and an exceptional number of statutory applications were received, considered, and dealt with.

Mr. R. McNab, the Receiver of Land Revenue, was retired on superannuation after thirty-five years of honourable service, and was succeeded by Mr. G. W. Palmer. Mr. John Forrester, Crown Lands Ranger, was also retired on superannuation during the year, after fifteen years' faithful service.

I have much pleasure in thanking all officers for their assistance since I assumed charge in June, 1912, having succeeded Mr. T. N. Brodrick, who was transferred to Wellington.

C. R. POLLEN,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

OTAGO.

The progress of settlement in this district is shown by the fact that the area now held is 5,731,525 acres, from which accrues an aggregate yearly rental of £126,526 16s. 9d. The net result of the past year's transactions was to bring seventy-three more tenants under the Land Board's jurisdiction, holding an area of 37,290 acres. Of these new tenants, fourteen took up farms which were subdivisions of the Elderslie No. 2 Settlement, near Enfield, and nine selected holdings when the Otanomomo Settlement, near Balclutha, was placed upon the market.

It is a pleasure to me to record that the Crown tenants in this district are, on the whole, satisfactorily fulfilling the conditions of their leases, and that land-speculators are rarely in evidence. The tenantry experienced an unusually good season during the past twelve months, and have thus been enabled to pay their rents promptly.

LAND TENURES AND TRANSACTIONS.

During the year twenty tenants availed themselves of the opportunity to convert their holdings into freeholds, and in this way the Crown parted with the fee-simple of 2,457 acres. Of these twenty tenants, one held a deferred-payment license, nine perpetual leases, five occupation-with-right-of-purchase licenses, two leases in perpetuity, one a village-settlement deferred-payment license, one a village-settlement perpetual lease, and one a village-homestead lease in perpetuity. Although tenants of farms of ordinary Crown land under the 999 years' lease have so far been slow to acquire the fee-simple of their lands, yet numerous inquiries have been made as to the terms of conversion, and there are not wanting indications that there will shortly be a brisker demand for the freehold of these leases in perpetuity. New selectors still evince a partiality for the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure, more especially as the right of purchase is now exercisable at any time after six years from the date of the license. Seventeen new settlers marked their preference in this way in respect of land offered under the optional system—that is to say, in relation to land offered for cash, on occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure, or under the renewable-lease tenure. Six small grazing-runs of national-endowment land, comprising 20,356 acres, were also leased. Two of these runs were subdivisions of Moutere Station, near Clyde, and three were subdivision of Lochindorb Station, near Clinton. The large number of applications lodged for this class of pastoral country shows that there is still existent a keen demand for land suited for the grazing of sheep. Nine pastoral runs, of a total area of 99,236 acres, and bringing an annual rental of £1,270 4s., were also leased. One of these runs was a large tract of land in the Lakes District, 57,400 acres in extent, and let at £5 a year.

Among minor transactions there was noticeable a slightly increased desire for timber country, eleven new licenses over 1,830 acres having been issued to various sawmilling enterprises.

ARREARS OF RENT.

The amount of rent in arrear, exclusive of the current half-yearly instalments payable in advance, is £233 17s. 8d. in respect of all tenures. The sum outstanding at this time last year was £1,178 1s. 4d., so that the considerable reduction effected—due, no doubt, in a large measure to the excellent season experienced—cannot but be regarded with satisfaction. It is noteworthy also that not a single tenant had cause to apply for a remission in rent.

FORFEITURES AND SURRENDERS.

Thirty-seven tenants forfeited their holdings either through failure to pay the rental at the due dates, non-improvement of their land, or non-compliance with the residential conditions.