

Table P.—The new runs disposed of cover an area of 44,000 acres. Another 130,000 acres have been applied for, but the area was not put in the market during this year.

Table Q.—Miscellaneous leases show a considerable decrease both in revenue and number of holdings, principally caused by the transference made from this to the Mines Department under the amended Mining Act.

Table S (Summary of Arrears due to the Crown, and referred to in Notes concerning Table D).—Advantage will doubtless be taken of provisions of "The Selectors' Lands Revaluation Act, 1892," to considerably reduce the amounts owing, and in some cases I was requested to stay further proceedings for recovery to enable this to be done. It has now, however, been determined to bring matters to a point one way or the other, and they must come under the Revaluation Act, pay up, or forfeit. In the miscellaneous leases the bulk of arrears is on mineral-lease rents on Rangitoto (£120).

Table T shows the lands reserved, alienated by Acts or scrip, &c. The area granted under the Acts has this year been an unusually heavy one for this district—viz., 20,015 acres, comprising, as it does, the grants (under sections 31 to 33 of contract) of Blocks 26 and 28 B¹ to, and the smaller areas disposed of by, the Midland Railway Company under latter section.

The lower and accessible portions of Westland are for the most part covered with dense forest, and as those on the East Coast are rapidly being cut out, this district is destined in the not distant future to assume a place in the front rank of the timber trade. The want of railway communication south of Greymouth has hitherto greatly hindered the development of this important industry; but this will soon be partly remedied when the line to Hokitika (now nearly completed) is opened. At the present time there are twelve saw-mills within the Westland District working on freehold land—one on Grey Coal Reserve, and eight on the mining blocks; some are very small, and a good few of them do not run regularly. The mills on mining blocks have cut 1,644,119 superficial feet, and odd cutters 12,000 superficial feet, or, in all, 1,656,119 superficial feet, the royalties on which amount to £261 14s. 2d. On the Grey Coal Reserve, 41,300ft. were cut; royalty, £8 5s; whilst on the Midland Railway reservation area, royalty has been paid on 1,137,185 superficial feet, amounting to £223 2s. 7d. Gross timber cutting passed through our books during year, 2,834,604 superficial feet; gross royalties, £493 1s. 9d. The royalties on all timber cut on mining blocks, and now also on Grey Coal Reserve, are payable to the Receivers of Gold Revenue, and form a portion of county revenue. On these blocks all timber licenses are granted by the Warden, but the cutting is done under supervision of our Crown Lands Ranger, who has been duly appointed by each Warden as his agent or inspector for the purposes of the mining regulations, in so far as they relate to timber matters. The Ranger sees that no illegal cutting goes on, that all necessary returns are made, and books duly kept by the mills, and also that the royalties are paid. On certain of the education reserves that are surrounded by these mining blocks he also supervises the timber cutting, and collects the royalties for the Education Board, which duly appointed him for that purpose, and for this work we charge these bodies (Board and County Council) 15 per cent. on royalties collected through Ranger's instrumentality. There is a large amount of timber cut in Westland for mining purposes which does not pass through our, or any other, books, as all holders of a miner's right can cut what timber they require for mining, fencing, and domestic purposes free of charge. On State forest reserves royalty was also collected to the amount of £18. I have no means of arriving at the quantity of timber cut by mills on private lands, but it must be very considerable. Several of them put out far more than any of those on the mining blocks.

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OTAGO.

The transactions during the year as a whole do not call for any special remark. It may be observed, however, that they did not equal the expectations formed at the commencement of the year, owing to the inability, from unforeseen contingencies, of getting into the market so large a portion of the lately-resumed runs for settlement as was anticipated. This fact will, of course, tend to augment the sales of the current year. Among the unforeseen contingencies referred to may be mentioned the temporary suspension incident to the bringing into operation of the new Land Act, and of completing the necessary surveys and preparatory details for the notification of the blocks intended for settlement. These blocks embrace portions of Galloway, Beaumont, Teviot, Highfield, Blackstone, Kyeburn, Lander, Ben Lomond, and other runs, the preparation of which is now well in hand, and it is hoped the notifications will shortly appear.

"The Land Act, 1892," having so recently come into operation, it is premature to declare as to how the new systems of occupation with right of purchase and lease in perpetuity are regarded by selectors generally, or in what relative proportion they will eventually be taken advantage of; but, so far as present experience shows, where the choice is left distinctly to the option of the selectors, the number of applicants under each are about equal.

A large number of applications have been made by settlers desirous of increasing their holdings under sections 114 and 115 of the Act, the dealing with which has caused a considerable amount of work and trouble. As you are aware, two Commissioners were appointed to visit the localities of most of the lands applied for, and upon their report a considerable number of applications were rejected, but up to the present time thirty have been granted, comprising an area of upwards of 7,000 acres, taken up on various systems, including cash, deferred payment, perpetual lease, and lease in perpetuity. Up to the present date more than a hundred of these applications have been received.