

The special-settlement block of 3,000 acres at Swinburn is being surveyed into fifteen allotments, which were duly balloted for in February last by the members of the Swinburn Farm Homestead Association, who, it is expected, will proceed to reside on the land as soon as the survey is completed.

With regard to the land held on settlement conditions, I gather from the reports of the Ranger that, while there are some few exceptions, as a general rule the selectors under all systems are steadily and satisfactorily carrying out the requirements of the Acts and regulations under which they respectively hold their lands, both as to residence, cultivation, and other improvements. A few cases in which there was manifest default were recently brought before the Land Board, and on notice being sent to the defaulters to the effect that the required improvements must be effected within a given time or cause shown why their leases or licenses should not be declared forfeited, immediate steps were taken to overtake the arrears, and a good all-round effect was produced in consequence of the Board's action in this matter. I am assured by the Rangers that the total average of the improvements effected throughout the whole district on lands held on settlement conditions is considerably in excess of the actual requirements of the Acts and regulations under which the lands are held.

The payments of rents and instalments have, generally speaking, been well up to time, and the arrears under this head, as will be seen from the returns, are more nominal than real, the greater proportion of payments due being for the current half-year. The process of summoning for arrears has not yet been resorted to, or even found necessary, here. Cases of arrears are from time to time reported to the Board, and a specified time fixed for payment, failing which the leases or licenses are declared forfeited; and, with few exceptions, the lessees or licensees whose titles have thus been treated pay up and have the forfeitures rescinded. This course has been found to work well, and answer all purposes, without incurring the expense of litigation.

I may state, in conclusion, that the departmental staff has been very fully occupied during the past year—so much so, indeed, that, unless many extra hours had been devoted to it, the work would not have been overtaken.

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#### SOUTHLAND.

*Lease in Perpetuity.*—So far as present experience goes, this appears to be the favourite tenure, many applications having been made to exchange the ordinary perpetual lease for this.

*Occupation with Right of Purchase.*—So far, this tenure comes next in order of preference to the lease in perpetuity.

*Village Settlements on Perpetual Lease.*—The number of selections made during the year was considerable. It may be remarked that more selections would have been made under all the village systems if all the unselected lands had been open for the whole year, but these lands were temporarily withdrawn when the present Land Act came into force. There is a constant tendency at work for people who have taken up these small areas in the past to endeavour to acquire more small lots, and thus to chafe against limitations of number and area of lots prescribed under the statutes and regulations.

*Village Homestead Special Settlements.*—On the whole, the position of these settlements may be regarded as satisfactory so far as improvements go.

*Small Grazing-runs.*—Until within the last few weeks there have been no transactions under this system, but, as a number of these runs will shortly be offered, the system will be on its trial here for the first time during the coming year.

*Pastoral Licenses* show a considerable shrinkage on previous years, owing to the large area which fell in, in March last, and which have not yet been re-let under the same system, but have been subdivided for settlement and small-run purposes, in accordance with the advice of the Classification Commissioners.

*Revenue.*—This is considerably less than for last year, and it is partly accounted for by the withdrawal of such a large area of pastoral licenses.

*Arrears.*—The amount is not satisfactory, and could be materially reduced; but this is purely a question of having a sufficient staff in the office to keep selectors up to their engagements.

*Selectors on the Books.*—These now number 1,313, an increase on last year, when the number stood at 1,288.

*Section 114 "Land Act, 1892."*—A few applications have been made under this section, but, as the only case yet dealt with under its terms has created some dissatisfaction, it is not thought that it will be extensively applied here. Moreover, as most of the Crown land still available is forest, there would be trouble in providing road-access suitable to general conditions when surveying isolated pieces.

*Residential and Improvement Conditions.*—The Ranger has made 363 formal inspections of holdings, and reports that ninety-seven deferred-payment selectors who selected between the years 1887 and 1891 cultivated 2,244 acres, and made improvements to the value of £11,000; and 266 perpetual-lease holders who took up land between the same periods cultivated 14,666 acres, and improved to the value of £55,221.

About 200 selectors are not residing, but this is generally either because they are living on adjoining lands or because residence is not compulsory; altogether there are not more than ten or twelve cases where selectors have failed to comply with the statutory conditions.

The large area of land which remains locked up under mining regulations, particularly in the western district between Riverton and Orepuki, is a serious bar to permanent settlement, and I am now in communication with the Warden to see whether it would not be possible and expedient to