

indebtedness of exactly £500. With two exceptions they are single payments, due in advance on the 1st January and the 1st March last. The promptness and regularity with which rents are paid is a good indication of prosperity. Immediately prior to the January instalment becoming due only eight of the numerous Crown tenants were in default, for the inconsiderable sum of £64.

Improvements.—Inspections have been made of 180 holdings, comprising 127,887 acres. The value of the required improvements was £22,579—that effected was found to be £69,479, slightly over 10s. an acre; and as a good proportion of those inspected have only been selected the last year or two, and consequently, to a large extent, unimproved, the results are highly satisfactory. The settlers generally have largely increased their stock, and many of the holdings have been made freehold for the purpose of borrowing money to further improve and stock the land, as lenders are found to be very reluctant to take mortgages over perpetual-lease lands. In the case of small holdings cattle are found taking the place of sheep, and in three of the settlements butter-factories have been started and are in full operation.

Land for Settlement.—Offers have been made of two advantageously situated runs of about 10,000 acres each, but, unfortunately, in the case of one, which was well adapted for subdivision into small farms, the price asked was too high. The other, while excellent in some respects, was not as a whole suitable for dividing into areas within the limits prescribed by law. It is to be regretted that offers have not been made of suitable properties at prices that it would be safe for the Crown to give, as there are so many inquiries for small farms of good quality on lease-in-perpetuity terms by settlers' sons, and persons anxious to put their sons on land, and who are prepared to supply the means to give them a start.

Land for Future Disposal.—At the present time, 30,438 acres are open for selection; 29,819 of it is rural land, and is principally hilly forest-country, and, though the soil generally is good, it is only adapted for sheep-grazing, in areas of from 1,000 to 2,000 acres. The area of the balance of Crown land is 293,181 acres. Each block is particularly described both as to position and character in the Land Guide, but, speaking generally, it is for the most part rough forest-country, unfit for close settlement, but the greater portion will make excellent grazing-country when improved. Some blocks lie far back, and are not likely to be taken up until the more accessible and better country is no longer obtainable, which means years to come. Throughout the year the inquiries for land have been numerous and constant, many coming from outside the colony. Of formal applications alone there were no less than 644 for the fifty-three sections disposed of on application. The want felt is land of a good quality, and of a character that will suit the man of small means; and it is to be hoped that some of this class of land, so much of which is now lying idle in the hands of the Natives in all parts of the district, will in some manner be made available.

THOMAS HUMPHRIES,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

WELLINGTON.

Summary of Lands disposed of during Year :—

Cash—	A.	R.	P.	A.	R.	P.
Ten rural sections	858	2	8			
Twenty-seven suburban sections	292	1	19			
Thirty-six town-land sections	16	0	0			
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Occupation with right of purchase (seventy sections)				20,981	1	5
Lease in perpetuity (thirty-six sections)				10,594	0	10
Village-settlement lease in perpetuity (twenty-four sections)				429	2	6
Farm homestead associations balloted for and registered (249 sections)				48,852	2	0
Small grazing-run (one section)				3,150	0	0
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Total				85,174	1	8

The total area shown to be disposed of is 71,122 acres less than last year, but this is owing to there being only nine farm homestead associations, containing 249 members, taking up 48,852 acres, registered, after the ballot had been taken for the allotment of the sections, this year, as compared with twenty-three associations, containing 671 members, taking up 127,656 acres, which were registered the previous year, showing a decrease of 78,803 acres. The land taken up for occupation with right of purchase shows an increase of 10,251 acres, and that taken up under lease-in-perpetuity conditions was increased by 5,016 acres; but these systems had only been in operation for about five months last year, and this year they show a full twelve months' transactions. The amount taken up under occupation with right of purchase is, as it had been during the previous half-year, about double that applied for under the lease-in-perpetuity conditions, notwithstanding that the rental under the latter is 20 per cent. less than is charged for land under occupation with right of purchase. The two systems can hardly be considered to have had a full trial in this land district yet, as we have been able to offer but comparatively little first-class land suitable for ordinary farming purposes under the Land Act of 1892.

New Lands opened during the Year.—58,700 acres, principally second-class pastoral lands, were opened for sale on the eastern side of the Tararua Range, known as Te Mara, Kaitangata, and Kaiparoro Blocks. Some of the valleys and lower spurs have been taken up, about 10,295 acres of it having been applied for. A better block, of 6,850 acres, known as the Otamakapua-