

SUMMARY of HOLDINGS reported on during the Year ended 31st March, 1897.

Tenure.	Number of Selectors.	Area.			Value of Improvements required.			Value of Improvements made.			Number of Selectors resident.	Number of Selectors absent.	Number of Partial Defaulters.	Number of Total Defaulters.
		A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.				
Deferred payment...	11	428	0	4	400	17	0	940	18	6	3	8	5	...
Perpetual lease ...	8	1,487	2	3	439	11	6	1,318	11	0	6	2	2	...
Occupation with right of purchase	9	1,022	1	13	133	6	0	739	5	0	7	2	1	...
Lease in perpetuity	76	29,709	1	35	11,525	2	11	15,814	2	6	58	18	13	1
Small grazing-runs	52	27,049	0	0	817	11	8	8,758	1	6	43	9	4	...
Village settlements	8	187	1	22	148	1	6	231	12	6	6	2	2	...
Totals ...	164	59,883	2	37	13,464	10	7	27,802	11	0	123	41	27	1

Value of improvements in excess of requirements = £14,338 0s. 5d.

WESTLAND.

Summary of Lands taken up.—An area of 81,050 acres was open for selection under the various tenures during the last twelve months. Of this area, 3,825 acres have been taken up, leaving an available balance of 77,225 acres at the end of the year.

Cash.—The total area disposed of under this only amounts to 115 acres, the bulk of the selectors electing to acquire their holdings under other systems.

Deferred Payment.—As compared with last year's return, the area occupied under this system has been reduced by 281 acres, and a further reduction, by conversion to freehold, is anticipated during the coming year.

Occupation with Right of Purchase.—The area returned under this title is less than during the preceding year, most of the available land outside of the Midland Railway reservation and near the townships having been taken up.

Lease in Perpetuity.—Under this heading 3,388 acres were taken up by twenty-two selectors. The selection of 2,717 acres by seventeen settlers on the Poerua Estate, under the Land for Settlements Act, is included in this area and number.

In addition to the 77,225 acres mentioned above, we have an immense area of back-country. The whole area consists of rough, mountainous districts, bordered by forest-clad foot-hills, with a fringe of terraced coastal land, the bulk of which is not likely to be taken up unless the successful exploitation of the great mineral belt which runs throughout the country induces mining population, and thereby creates local markets.

A large area of splendid tussock on our mountain-tops, above the timber-line, is at present lying waste. In the past the one or two attempts which have been made to utilise this country have failed, because the sheep were left there to brave the winter snow-storms, the owners becoming careless owing to having successfully wintered their stock in previous mild seasons. At present sheep may be safely pastured on the high lands for eight months in the year; but feed must be provided for them in the low country for the remaining four. We have one or two enterprising farmers who are successfully following out this method, and there is ample scope for a number of energetic settlers to copy their example. Hitherto sufficient attention has not been paid to the breed of sheep most suitable for these mountain pastures. The richest soil in Westland is on the middle mountain-slopes, and eventually, when these are cleared of the scrubby, stunted timber and grassed, stock may run quite safely throughout the year. We are patiently waiting for the removal of the Midland Railway reservation. The locking-up of this vast area has paralysed the farming and sawmilling industry: scores of young energetic Westlanders, born and bred to our local methods of bush-farming, have been compelled to swarm abroad, instead of settling around the parent hives. To instance this, we have only to note the number of applications for sawmilling areas which are periodically postponed by the Land Board, pending the longed-for resumption, and the daily-increasing numbers of temporary grazing-areas granted under the 219th clause of "The Land Act, 1892," this being the only way any land can even be temporarily acquired within the reservation. Despite the short lease of three years, the insecurity of tenure, and the restrictions as to felling the large timber, we have 117 of these leaseholders, occupying 21,788 acres. The Ranger reports all of these are *bonâ fide* settlers of the best class, who are clearing, building, fencing, and grassing their holdings, hoping that eventually they will have a chance of acquiring the land under more secure tenure.

Land for Settlements Acts.—The Poerua Estate was opened for selection on the 26th June, and out of twenty sections, aggregating 3,128 acres, only seven, comprising 1,121 acres, were taken up. Since then ten sections, amounting to 1,597 acres, have been applied for and granted. We have thus only two sections, of 410 acres, left unapplied for, and these will doubtless be taken up at an early date. 131 chains of roading has been cleared, culverted, and partly formed, at a cost of £254 4s. 4d. Further contracts will be taken in hand as the necessity for such arises. There is