

The small grazing-runs and grazing-farms are included within the above figures. There were sixty-four of these selections during the year, which cover 155,109 acres. They are situated in all parts of the colony. This tenure is a somewhat favoured one, the terms being practically recurring leases of twenty-one years' duration.

The total area within the colony held under these three pastoral tenures on the 31st March was 12,516,171 acres, and the number of holders was 1,574.

The grazing-farm tenure is applicable to the Cheviot Estate alone; it differs little from the small grazing-run system.

"THE MINING DISTRICTS LAND OCCUPATION ACT, 1894."

Under this Act—which is intended to provide a system of settlement within the goldfields where other systems are not available—the transactions were double those of last year, sixty-four selections, containing 2,294 acres, having been taken up.

THE AGRICULTURAL-LEASE SYSTEM.

As also only applicable to the goldfields may be mentioned the agricultural-lease system, which is now nearly obsolete, and in a few years will disappear altogether. There are but twenty holdings of 652 acres left. The total transactions from the first initiation of the scheme amount to 1,471, with an area of 140,583 acres, all of which, excepting these 652 acres, has become freehold.

SETTLEMENT CONDITIONS.

All classes of settlement where the freehold remains vested in the Crown are subject to conditions of various natures, implying ever-increasing inspection by the Crown Lands Rangers on behalf of the landlord—the Crown. When it is remembered that the Crown tenants number 16,406 (less 968 pastoral and 2,006 miscellaneous leases) it will be seen that the work of inspection, to be thorough, is a considerable undertaking. It is in the early years of tenancy that most inspection is required, for after various periods this ceases in a measure; but, nevertheless, the inspection is a work taxing the Rangers, with the occasional help of other officers, very heavily. The very great importance of close inspection in the high-price estates now being acquired cannot be insisted on too strongly. Ignorance or neglect on the part of the tenant will very soon depreciate the properties. However careful the Land Boards may be in the selection of tenants for the estates, it is impossible to avoid admitting the wrong man occasionally. Taken as a whole, the condition of leases, &c., are well complied with, as will be seen by the following figures supplied by the Commissioners:—

Number of Properties inspected.	Area inspected.	Improvements required by Law.	Improvements actually made.	Settlers in default.			
				Improvements.	Non-residence.	Other.	Total.
5,926	Acres. 1,159,202	£369,627	£887,998	447	695	54	1,196

It will be seen that the largest number of the defaulters are those who have not complied with the residence clauses. There are several reasons for this, principally the want of access by roads suitable for wheeled traffic, and by which selectors can convey their families and household goods on to their lands.

STATE FORESTS AND PLANTATIONS.

In order to keep up a continuous record of reserves made for the above and cognate purposes it may be stated that on the 31st March, 1899, the total forest land under reserve was 1,587,846 acres. During the past year additions have been made as follows: Auckland, 66,335 acres; Hawke's Bay, 131,780 acres; Taranaki, 52,128 acres; Wellington, 437,043 acres; Canterbury, 5,600 acres; plantations generally, 633 acres; and for preservation of native fauna and flora, 1,439 acres; or a total addition of 694,958 acres: thus bringing up the total so reserved at the 31st March, 1900, to 2,282,804 acres. The greater part of the reserves made during the past year lie along the main backbone range of mountains of the North Island—i.e., the Tararua and Ruahine Ranges, and their continuation under various names in the direction of the East Cape. These reserves are, in their nature, more climatic than for timber purposes, whilst they serve at the same time the very important purpose of preserving the vegetation at the head of many rivers.

The importance of reserving areas of forest for timber purposes is growing yearly. It is to be feared that within a short period timber of marketable kinds will become scarce. The Commissioner of Crown Lands, Auckland, supplies some figures which tend to emphasize this, and, indeed, to cause some apprehension as to the future of the kauri timber industry in the north. An approximation of the amount of untouched kauri on Crown lands is 757,000,000 ft.; on Native lands and lands purchased or leased from the Natives, 550,000,000 ft.; to which should be added an uncertain but not very large amount on other private lands. The output of kauri for the last three years amounted to about 210,000,000 ft., 126,000,000 ft. of which were exported. These figures speak for themselves. So far as can be ascertained, the output of timber within the colony is increasingly rapidly each year.

The State forests in the north again suffered through fire, but not to such an extent as in some previous years. In Omahuta, one of the finest State forests remaining, between five and six million feet of kauri were scorched, which will necessitate its sale before it deteriorates.