

the Punaroa Settlement; (2) part of the Levels Valley Farm, comprising 1,562 acres of agricultural land between Timaru and Pleasant Point, acquired from J. Sullivan, Esq., and renamed the Papaka Settlement; (3) a small property of 113 acres of agricultural land close to Winchester, acquired from Messrs. Wade and Evans, and renamed the Rautawiri Settlement. It may be mentioned that the whole of these three properties were taken up immediately they were offered.

*Payments of Rents.*—The total amount of arrears of rents due in respect of lands purchased under the Land for Settlements Acts is £1,285 7s. 5d. owing by sixty tenants, out of a total annual rental of £34,895 1s. 1d. payable by 696 holders. Of the amount in arrear, more than half is owing by settlers in the Highbank and Marawiti Settlements. Many of the holders in these settlements suffered severely, it is true, from the disastrous gale which occurred in September, 1898, and not only destroyed their newly sown crops, but carried away a good deal of the surface-soil. There is reason, however, to believe that in most cases the settlers could have kept up their payments better than they have done, though all possible leniency has been shown to them. The above-mentioned arrears are included in the total amount referred to in the ordinary Lands Report.

*Forfeitures and Surrenders.*—During the year, forfeitures and surrenders took place of sixteen holdings, comprising a total area of 3,767 acres 1 rood 39 perches, made up as follows: Lease in perpetuity, eleven selectors, 1,049 acres 3 roods 17 perches, forfeited; lease in perpetuity, four selectors, 4 acres 2 roods 22 perches, surrendered; small grazing-run, one selector, 2,713 acres, forfeited. In most cases the forfeitures took place by reason of the failure of the original selectors to comply with the conditions of residence and occupation, and the majority of the sections, when reoffered for disposal, are readily taken up again.

*Condition of Established Settlements.*—The reports furnished by the Crown Lands Rangers on the settlements disclose a very satisfactory extent of occupation. In the majority of cases the holders have established comfortable and permanent homes upon their sections, and their improvements are of good quality, and in value generally much in excess of requirements. The small holdings of under 50 acres in the rural settlements are still the most unsatisfactory feature noticeable in the reports: whether held by single men who only sleep at home at intervals, or by married men who are obliged to devote nearly all their energies to outside work in order to maintain their families, the holdings in either case fail to secure the satisfactory occupation and settlement which is to be desired. In some cases, matters in this respect are being improved by permitting amalgamation by transfer to adjoining holders of some of the smaller holdings, but legislative authority is needed to place such action on a satisfactory basis.

The following notes, summarising the results of the Rangers' reports, and presenting in a condensed form some of the information embodied in Lands for Settlement Table, may be of interest:—

*Pareora No. 1 Settlement* (near St. Andrew's).—Twenty-eight holders, of whom twenty-four reside upon their own holdings, and two others on other sections in the settlement. Number of souls, 114. Value of improvements required, £1,052 4s. 1d.; effected, £1,996 8s. 6d. These are, with only four exceptions, fully up to the value required for the sixth year, which expired in January last, and in most cases much in excess of requirements. The settlement is generally satisfactory, although many of the holdings are too small to support the holders and their families, and they have to go far to obtain employment.

*Studholme Junction Settlement* (near Studholme Junction).—Four holders, all of whom reside in the settlement, and are doing well. Number of souls, 14. Value of improvements required, £214 7s. 10d.; effected, £357 18s.

*Kapua Settlement* (near Waimate).—Eleven holders, nine of whom are resident and complying satisfactorily. Two of the tenants have been very unsatisfactory, although it is hoped that action taken by the Board will produce better compliance. Number of souls, 41. Value of improvements required, £914 9s. 2d.; effected, £1,065 4s. 6d.

*Rosebrook Settlement* (near Timaru).—Fourteen holders, all of whom are residing, except one who has gone to South Africa. Number of souls, 67. Value of improvements required, £307 13s. 6d.; effected, £1,828 11s. 6d.

*Otaio Settlement* (near St. Andrew's).—Nine holders, who are, with one exception, complying satisfactorily. Number of souls, 30. Value of improvements required, £216 14s. 8d.; effected, £874 14s. 6d.

*The Peaks and Patoa Settlements* (near Hurunui).—Fifteen holders, nearly all of whom reside by permission upon other Crown holdings in the neighbourhood. Total value of improvements required, £502 7s. 1d.; effected, £2,060.

*Romata Suburban Settlement* (near Christchurch).—Twenty-six holders, all complying, and forming a very prosperous settlement. Number of souls, 115. Value of improvements required, £553 18s.; effected, £3,594.

*Braco Settlement* (near Christchurch).—Fourteen holders, two of whom are often away at work, but the others are complying satisfactorily. Number of souls, 41. Value of improvements required, £289 13s. 4d.; effected, £990.

*Kereta Settlement* (near Timaru).—Four holders, all complying. Number of souls, 28. Value of improvements required, £82 18s.; effected, £548 5s. 6d.

*Epworth Settlement* (near Temuka).—Two holders, man and wife, who reside on one of the sections. Number of souls, 4. Value of improvements required, £13 11s. 2d.; effected, £98 16s.

*Ashley Gorge Settlement* (near Oxford), consisting, with adjacent Crown lands, of twelve holdings, on all of which there is good fulfilment of conditions. Number of souls, 53. Value of improvements required, £617 11s. 4d.; effected, £2,208.

*Orakipaoa Settlement* (near Temuka).—Twenty-seven holders, of whom fifteen are in residence, ten continue to reside by permission in the neighbouring Arowhenua Village, and two are defaulters. The holdings which are resided on are satisfactory, and good improvements have