

annual rental of £33,976. If to these figures are added the leases under the Land for Settlements and Cheviot Estates Acts, the grand totals are as follow: Number of leases, 5,798; area, 1,422,915 acres; annual rental, £144,545 18s. 9d. No diminution can occur under this tenure, except by forfeiture or surrender.

AGRICULTURAL LEASES.

Holdings under this system still appear in the departmental returns to the number of 17, with an area of 555 acres, and yearly rental of £30 19s. 3d. The tenure was devised and provided for originally in "The Goldfields Act, 1866" (section 35, Part V.), to meet the requirements of miners and others on proclaimed goldfields. Advantage was freely taken of the Act in the Otago District, and, to a much less extent, in the Auckland and Southland goldfields. As the selectors were enabled to acquire the freehold, 1,475 holdings, aggregating 140,896 acres, were purchased at a cost of £138,741.

OCCUPATION LICENSES.

These are issued under "The Mining Districts Lands Occupation Act, 1894," and, as the title indicates, provision is made for miners and others to secure land for homestead and other purposes. During the year 52 selections were made in the Auckland, Otago, and Southland Districts, comprising an area of 2,433 acres, with an annual rent of £122. The total area held under the system is 15,945 acres, by 383 licensees, who pay £940 per annum.

VILLAGE SETTLEMENTS.

This system received more attention, and probably aroused greater interest, than any other; and when in former years the Crown was possessed of land adapted by quality and situation for the purpose, villages were established throughout the length and breadth of the colony. They were formed under various systems, such as the cash, deferred-payment, perpetual-lease, and, later, under "The Land Act, 1892," on the lease-in-perpetuity, and, to a small extent, the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenures; but little Government control was possible under the cash system, and many of the deferred-payment and perpetual-lease holdings have passed from the care and administration of the Department.

Those under the village-homestead, perpetual-lease, and lease-in-perpetuity tenures only are subject to inspection and periodical report.

The transactions for the year comprise 92 selections, with an area of 2,119 acres 3 roods 22 perches.

On the 31st March last the number of holdings was 1,839, with an area of 35,544 acres, and an annual rental of £5,579. As is well known, the Government extended assistance to the villagers, and advanced £15,115 to enable them to erect dwellings and bring their lots into cultivation, which average 19 acres; the total value of improvements effected is £168,041.

Eliminating the inevitable failures due to absence of the necessary conditions to insure success, the system as a whole stands as a monument of industry and thrift, fostered by Government aid and sympathetic and helpful administration.

It is much to be regretted that we no longer possess much land which, by quality and situation, is suitable for settlement under this system.

Reference should be made to the full and complete report by Mr. J. E. March, Superintendent of Village Settlements, containing particulars relating to village settlements (*vide* Appendix III.).

SPECIAL-SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATIONS.

Power to establish settlements by this method was provided in the first instance by "The Land Act 1877 Amendment Act, 1879," and the first regulations controlling the same were prescribed by Order in Council of the 28th November, 1884. The original tenure was deferred payment; this was altered to perpetual lease by regulations on the 5th December, 1885, but without the right to acquire the freehold. This concession, however, was subsequently allowed by "The Land Act Amendment Act, 1887." On the passing of "The Land Act, 1892," the lease-in-perpetuity tenure applied to future associations.

The opportunity was eagerly availed of, and associations were formed in centres and towns, especially in the Wellington Land District, and some 85 settlements were established,