

"*Thirds*" and "*Fourths*."—The following table shows the amounts at credit on the 31st March last in the various Receiver's books payable to local bodies as "*thirds*" and "*fourths*" under the provisions of section 126 of "The Land Act, 1892":—

	£	s.	d.
Auckland	7,283	18	8
Hawke's Bay	2,586	0	2
Taranaki	6,071	0	1
Wellington	19,625	12	0
Marlborough	821	8	2
Nelson	592	15	9
Westland	196	11	8
Canterbury	687	10	7
Otago	2,145	17	10
Southland	1,199	18	2
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	£41,210	13	1

Compared with the position in the previous year there has been an increase in the Auckland, Taranaki, Marlborough, and Westland items, and a decrease in the others; whilst the total exceeds that in the year 1901–2 by £576 14s. 3d.

Nearly half of the whole amount is lying in the Wellington Receiver's hands. Its application to supplement the grants of public money which have to be expended in giving access to the settlers' holdings would be a welcome and substantial benefit to many. The attention of settlers has been time and again drawn to the opportunity they have of utilising the accrued "*thirds*" by paying the annual interest and sinking fund upon loans obtained under the Government Loans to Local Bodies Act. This method has already been applied very extensively in the Wellington District, and has resulted in the settlers obtaining improved access, which has enabled them to secure the advantage of joining in the output of butter and cheese many years in advance of the time when they would have secured similar advantages if they had waited until roads were completed by the annual grants of Parliament. Legislation has been suggested with a view to giving the Minister of Lands power to direct the expenditure of accumulation of "*thirds*" and "*fourths*" where such seems necessary in the interests of the selectors whose sections furnish the amounts.

ARREARS.

In contradistinction to the practice prevailing between private landlords and tenants, rents are payable to the Crown in advance, upon the first day of January and July in each year, excepting under the small-grazing-run and pastoral-license, and some miscellaneous leases, when they become due on the 1st days of March and September respectively.

Reference to Table 31 will afford full information as to the number of selectors, the area, and amount in arrear under each system as at the 31st March, 1903.

For ordinary Crown lands the number of selectors in arrear on that date is 1,045, holding under lease or license 410,668 acres, the amount to which they are indebted to the Crown being £9,193 19s. Comparing these with the figures representing the total number of Crown tenants, the area they hold, and the total amount of annual rental which they pay, it will be noticed that one tenant in every fifteen is indebted to the Crown, that the area on which rent is due is one thirty-ninth of the lands under occupation, while the percentage of rentals in arrears is 4·4.

As regards the Cheviot Estate, the number of tenants in arrear is 22, representing 7,629 acres, the amount of their liability being £617, or 4·2 per cent.

Taking the lands under the Land for Settlements conditions as a whole, there were 279 tenants, leasing 61,780 acres, who were in arrears to the extent of £10,497, which is 8·8 per cent. on the total amount of their rentals.

The arrears under the Thermal Springs (Rotorua) conditions amount to £100 15s. 8d. out of an annual rental of £1,939 6s. 4d., or 5·2 per cent.

The total arrears due by Crown tenants under all systems of tenure are therefore £20,409 8s. 8d. out of a gross rental of £340,339 18s. 8d., representing 5·9 per cent. of the whole.

The foregoing figures do not include the current half-year's instalment which fell due on the 1st January, 1903.