

year's; the gross area is 28,396 acres more; and the average of the holdings, 365 acres, exceeds that of the previous year by 71 acres, because the class of lands was not so good. The lease-in-perpetuity selections, 489, increased by 204, but the area is 5,694 acres less. The average holding, 209 acres, corresponds with the position and quality of the lands dealt with; the rentals collected on both the latter tenures show a corresponding increment, and are only exceeded by the receipts on pastoral licenses and miscellaneous leases. The failing supply of suitable Crown lands accounts for the falling-off in village-settlement selections from ninety-two to fifty-five lots, and in area from 2,120 acres to 794 acres. Only four lots were allotted on the special-settlement system, comprising less than one-seventh the area of the year 1902-3. On the other hand, the area allotted as improved farms was about five times greater; the occupation leases about double those of the year before. The disparity under the head of small grazing-runs is in favour of the year under review; the number of pastoral runs is the same; the combined receipts in 1903-4 on both tenures were less by £6,764; the miscellaneous leases and licenses and miscellaneous receipts generally are much the same for both years. Passing over numerous subordinate items, the Cheviot Estate returns show a satisfactory reduction in the capital cost, and the Land for Settlements receipts a considerable increase.

The land transactions for the financial period 1903-4 are represented in a concise form in Table C.

TABLE C.—COMPARISON of OPERATIONS during Year, under PRINCIPAL HEADINGS, with those for previous Year.

Tenure.	1902-1903.		1903-1904.	
	Number of Selectors.	Area.	Number of Selectors.	Area.
		Acres.		Acres.
Cash sales* ... ..	393	17,203	445	22,489
Deferred payment ... ..	...	...	...	...
Perpetual lease ... ..	...	...	...	...
Occupation with right of purchase ... ..	403	118,557	403	146,953
Lease in perpetuity† ... ..	706	173,669	1,049	215,466
Pastoral and small grazing runs ... ..	174	1,164,705	187	1,101,367
Mining and occupation leases ... ..	55	2,469	99	4,985
Miscellaneous leases ... ..	516	113,064	630	133,686
New transactions ... ..	2,247	1,589,667	2,813	1,624,946
Forfeitures and surrenders ... ..	410	293,572	466	415,701
Net increase ... ..	1,837	1,296,095	2,347	1,209,245

\* Inclusive of subdivisions of town and suburban lands.

† " subdivision of land for settlements.

The total number of selectors under the tenures as grouped is 2,813, an increase of 566 upon the previous year. The gross area disposed of, 1,624,946 acres, is 35,279 acres in excess of last year's total. There was an increase in the number and area of lands disposed of for cash; but the greater part of this area was taken up by those applicants for land under Part III. of "The Land Act, 1892," who prefer purchasing the freehold. Though the number of selectors under the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure is identical with that for the preceding year, there was a considerable increase in the area taken up under this tenure. The greatest increment is shown under the head of lease in perpetuity, there being an excess of 343 selectors and 41,797 acres, due, no doubt, to the fact that large areas of Crown lands were opened upon this tenure only and because all the leases of the same class under the Land for Settlements Acts are included. The pastoral and small-grazing-run tenures show an increase in number, but a reduction in the area disposed of. Not much importance can be attached to this, as pastoral runs comprise areas of land reclassified and reopened on the expiration of licenses.

The number and area of leases within mining districts are nearly double the previous year's figures. This is an indication that there is desire on the part of residents within goldfields to secure homesteads and areas of land for cultivation.

A considerable increase in miscellaneous leases is mainly due to the attention which the Department has given in recent years to the duty of leasing remnants of Crown lands and the numerous public reserves, so as to bring them into profitable use and save the Crown the expense of rabbiting and the destruction of noxious weeds.