

Crown Lands opened for Selection.—The total area opened for sale or selection during the year amounted to 90,655 acres, in the Kongahu, Mokihinui, Inangahua, Burnett, Rahu, Matiri, Brighton, Steeples, Mount Arthur, Rintoul, and Tadmor Survey Districts. 84,781 acres, being within mining districts, were opened under lease in perpetuity only, and 4,625 acres under the optional clauses of "The Land Act, 1892."

Cash Lands.—The total amount received for cash sales of rural land by twenty selectors amounted to £1,884 13s. 5d., for an area of 4,704 acres 3 roods 4 perches, of which 309 acres 3 roods 31 perches was selected by adjoining occupiers under section 114 of the Land Act. These areas are scattered over the whole land district, the bulk of the land applied for being in the Rintoul, Tadmor, and Wangamoa Survey Districts. About 4,250 acres was selected solely for pastoral purposes, the balance in small areas for mixed farming.

Lease in perpetuity.—Fifty-three settlers selected 16,468 acres and 27 perches under this tenure during the year, the bulk of the area being situate in the Central Buller and Maruia Districts, and practically the whole of this area has been taken up for pastoral purposes, sheep and cattle raising being the most profitable use the land can be placed to in these districts.

Deferred payment.—Forty-six lessees, holding 4,851 acres and 35 perches, have acquired the freehold during the year, leaving 123 holders with an area of 11,803 acres 1 rood 4 perches remaining on the books.

Mining Districts Land Occupation Act.—Nine selections were made under this Act for small areas in mining districts. The leases under this tenure now number 106; area 2,896 acres 1 rood 38 perches.

Pastoral Licenses under Regulations for Occupation of Pastoral Lands within Mining districts.—Intending settlers in mining districts where the land has not been proclaimed open under the Land Act have eagerly taken advantage of these regulations for acquiring holdings. Already thirty-six selectors have acquired 9,170 acres, chiefly for pastoral purposes, and a number of other applications will shortly be dealt with by the Board as soon as the Ranger's and Warden's reports are received. None of these settlers have yet been in occupation twelve months, and reports as to progress and value of improvements are necessarily deferred till next year.

Village Homesteads.—Seddonville Special Settlement: This settlement has continued in a prosperous state since the State Coal Mine, which is close to it, was opened, the majority of the settlers being engaged in coal-mining. There are now seventy-five people in the settlement, and, of the area taken up of 101 acres, 80 acres of bush has been felled and is now in grass. The land is about the best in this part of the district, and the holdings, which are in orchards, gardens, and paddocks for dairying, are looking well, and the tenants seem prosperous. Total value of improvements effected, £1,830.

Coal and Mineral Leases.—The output of coal from the Westport Coal Company's mines at Denniston and Millerton for the past year amounted to over half a million (500,231) tons, on which royalties amounting to £12,738 4s. 2d. were collected by this office. Extensive developments are taking place in the workings of the Millerton Mine, and a still larger output is expected during the current year.

Miscellaneous Leases and Licenses.—Two hundred and seventy-three licenses, with an area of 13,152 acres and 6 perches, were issued during the year, comprising 216 timber licenses, 28 licenses under section 116 of the Land Act for small areas chiefly in mining districts, and 29 miscellaneous. There are now 857 miscellaneous licenses, with an area of 89,095 acres 3 roods 1 perch, on the books.

Endowment Lands.—The Westport Harbour Board endowments, which are entirely administered and the rents collected by this office, now comprise 398 leases, area 7,079 acres and 27 perches. The revenue of these lands, including coal and timber royalties, amounted to the large sum of £14,152 19s. 9d. for the past year. The arrears of rents on this large revenue only amount to £58 5s.

SAWMILLING AND TIMBER-CUTTING INDUSTRIES.

The Crown Lands Ranger reports that during the past year the timber industry has not made any great progress, owing, no doubt, to the export trade falling off on account of the marketable timber (namely, white-pine) at present not being obtainable, while other classes of timber were not in any great demand. Therefore the mills were not by any means kept fully occupied.

There are about 466 men employed in the timber trade—some at the mills, others cutting railway sleepers, firewood, posts, mining-timber, &c.

The total number of sawmills erected on private and Crown lands and harbour reserves is thirty-nine, and from the latter two descriptions of land 2,385,950 superficial feet of timber was cut, and the royalty collected on same was £770 18s. 6d.; while the number of railway sleepers cut was 85,166, and royalty collected on same amounted to £914 8s. 9d.: thus making the total amount of royalty collected for year, £1,685 7s. 3d. The area of land now held for timber-cutting purposes throughout the district is 12,683 acres 2 roods 28 perches.

PROGRESS AND CONDITIONS OF SETTLEMENT.

The Rangers' reports show that during the year inspections were made as follows:—

| Districts. | Number of Inspections. | Area. | Value of Improvements. | | Defaulters. | | Total. |
|---|------------------------|------------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|--------|
| | | | Required. | Effected. | Improvements. | Non-residence. | |
| Northern portion of district— Counties of Collingwood, Waimea, and Sounds | 116 | Acres. 24,819 | £ 5,649 | £ 14,696 | 11 | 16 | 27 |
| Southern portion of district— Counties of Buller and Inangahua | 85 | 7,805 | 1,087 | 6,150 | 7 | 9 | 16 |
| Totals | 201 | 32,624 | 6,736 | 20,846 | 18 | 25 | 43 |