

LANDS SELECTED ON THE OPTIONAL SYSTEM ONLY.

TABLE F.—LANDS SELECTED ON OPTIONAL SYSTEM, showing Preference of Tenure.

| | Occupation with Right of Purchase. | | Lease in Perpetuity. | | Cash. | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|
| | Number. | Area. | Number. | Area. | Number. | Area. |
| Year, 1907-8 | 343 | Acres. 186,338 | 41 | Acres. 17,305 | 43 | Acres. 10,573 |

A glance at the above table shows that of the ordinary Crown lands opened under the optional system the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure still holds the foremost place.

INSPECTIONS BY RANGERS.

The appended table is the most convenient form in which to present the results of the Rangers' work during the year. The widespread bush-fires of the past season (referred to in the succeeding paragraph) not only rendered their work specially difficult, but greatly delayed them in carrying out the usual routine duties, as they were required to make special and urgent examinations of the burnt areas in many parts of their districts. The brunt of this fell upon the Rangers in the Auckland, Taranaki, and Wellington Land Districts, energetically seconded by members of the survey staff where necessary.

TABLE G.—NUMBER of INSPECTIONS made by the RANGERS for the Year ended 31st March, 1908.

| District. | Number of Properties visited. | Area. | | Value of Improvements. | | | | Number of Defaulters. | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------|----|------------------------|---------|----------------|----|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------|-----|-----|-------|
| | | | | Required. | | Actually made. | | For Improve-ments. | For Non-re-sidence. | For other Reasons. | Total. | | | |
| | | A. | B. | P. | £ | s. | d. | £ | s. | d. | | | | |
| Auckland ... | 2,507 | 632,926 | 0 | 0 | 125,435 | 0 | 0 | 257,638 | 0 | 0 | 216 | 311 | ... | 527 |
| Hawke's Bay | 693 | 347,604 | 2 | 23 | 143,965 | 5 | 0 | 532,619 | 7 | 9 | 53 | 62 | 12 | 127 |
| Taranaki ... | 736 | 261,429 | 3 | 32 | 70,611 | 0 | 0 | 171,734 | 18 | 6 | 61 | 77 | ... | 138 |
| Wellington | 1,527 | 1,079,357 | 3 | 15 | 41,974 | 8 | 3 | 132,407 | 19 | 0 | 26 | 33 | 3 | 62 |
| Nelson ... | 407 | 90,064 | 1 | 20 | 15,066 | 4 | 5 | 40,143 | 13 | 7 | 111 | 93 | ... | 204 |
| Marlborough | 467 | 128,599 | 0 | 0 | 61,955 | 0 | 0 | 132,337 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 99 | ... | 107 |
| Westland ... | 632 | 72,250 | 0 | 0 | 23,318 | 14 | 3 | 63,522 | 2 | 0 | 66 | 67 | ... | 133 |
| Canterbury | 2,146 | 600,276 | 0 | 37 | 280,253 | 11 | 7 | 531,300 | 18 | 0 | 36 | 14 | ... | 40 |
| Otago ... | 928 | 252,620 | 3 | 5 | 106,374 | 13 | 7 | 192,561 | 7 | 6 | 69 | 18 | ... | 87 |
| Southland ... | 615 | 115,514 | 0 | 29 | 45,761 | 18 | 8 | 81,996 | 16 | 0 | 48 | 18 | ... | 66 |
| Total ... | 10,658 | 3,580,643 | 0 | 1 | 914,715 | 15 | 9 | 2,136,262 | 2 | 4 | 694 | 792 | 15 | 1,501 |

RESULTS OF SEVERE BUSH FIRES (MORE PARTICULARLY IN THE NORTH ISLAND).

As an addendum to the foregoing paragraph, giving the results of the inspections by the Crown Lands Rangers, there naturally follows a short paragraph dealing with the efforts made by the Government (and intrusted to this Department to carry out) to alleviate in some measure the severe losses experienced by settlers of all descriptions—both freeholders and Crown leaseholders—through the effects of the disastrous bush-fires which swept over large areas of the North Island, and to a lesser extent in the South Island, in the Land Districts of Marlborough, Nelson, and Southland, during the months of January and February, 1908. Very little rain had fallen in New Zealand from October, 1907, until March, 1908, and this, combined with an unusually hot summer, culminated in severe fires, which swept not only forest, but fern and grass country, destroying homesteads, fencing, &c., and causing great (though in many cases only temporary) distress amongst the struggling class of settlers incidental to newly settled districts. To meet the great destruction of grass-producing lands, the Government decided to advance grass-seed to all classes of settlers who were not otherwise in a position to obtain it, and, in order to hasten the distribution of seed, urgent instructions were sent to the several Commissioners of Crown Lands to enlist the services of every Ranger, and (if necessary) of Government surveyors, to ascertain the