

A season of drought, unprecedented for fifteen years, extending from November to March last proved detrimental to many settlers in northern Nelson. Turnip, rape, and potato crops, and also in a lesser degree hops, suffered; but oats, wheat, and barley crops were equal to previous years.

The bush-fires, which occurred during the drought, and to which I specially refer in another paragraph, swept a large area, the probable outcome of which will be the grassing of the burnt country, and consequently an increased carrying-capacity for stock. In view of the establishing of freezing-works in Nelson at an early date (a company has been formed and capital subscribed) several farmers have already commenced to bring waste lands into cultivation. There is no doubt but that freezing-works successfully established will mean the regeneration of Nelson from a pastoral point of view.

The Crown lessees in this district are observing the terms and conditions of their leases in as satisfactory a manner as can reasonably be expected in bush-clad country. Bush settlement requires nursing in its early stages. It is inevitable that a settler here and there shall fail in his efforts to succeed on land, just as a man will fail in any other walk of life. Where, however, the settler is possessed of energy, perseverance, and industry, and desires to establish himself on the land, the Board treats him generously, affording him all the assistance permissible by law—and the Land Act is read liberally in this regard.

Writing with a personal knowledge of most of the backblocks settlers in this district, and having witnessed their submission to the hardships associated with pioneer settlement, I have nothing but admiration for their qualities. At the same time the Government of the Dominion by expenditure on roads, extension of telegraphs, telephones, postal and educational facilities, is doing its share in the work of creating and furthering settlement, and the settler recognises this.

The following tabulated statement shows the land transactions during the year, the area under lease at the 31st March, 1908, and the revenue received during the past year:—

Tenure.	Transactions during the Year.			Area under Lease at 31st March, 1908.			Revenue received during the Year.				
	Number.	Area.		Number.	Area.						
<i>Ordinary Crown Lands.</i>											
Cash	28	A.	R.	P.	...	A.	R.	P.	£	s.	d.
Deferred payment	...	4,975	0	9	24	2,919	0	27	1,856	13	8
Deferred payment made freehold	57	5,943	0	4	...	...	...	...	394	4	0
Perpetual lease	...	...	...	...	11	1,922	2	13	49	13	0
Occupation with right of purchase	23	9,268	3	11	206	45,451	3	2	676	10	2
Occupation with right of purchase made freehold	6	1,510	3	39	...	...	...	...	514	10	5
Lease in perpetuity	63	20,214	2	21	381	108,625	0	3	1,154	17	0
Lease in perpetuity made freehold	4	1,521	2	0	...	...	...	...	1,032	0	0
Lease in perpetuity—Land for settlements	14	4,204	0	9	13	4,099	0	9	631	9	8
Mining districts land occupation lease	8	558	1	37	40	2,085	1	32	51	17	1
Small grazing-runs	2	4,034	3	18	9	16,757	3	18	83	16	5
Small grazing-runs—Land for settlements	1	1,947	0	0	1	1,947	0	0	24	8	8
Pastoral runs	...	...	...	...	2	165,829	0	0	317	10	0
Pastoral licenses within mining districts	18	4,215	0	30	40	7,830	0	30	106	14	5
Miscellaneous leases and licenses, including coal and timber royalties	129	21,217	3	7	710	185,087	1	36	4,315	11	9
Other sources — Renewable lease	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	641	11	1
Totals	353	79,611	1	25	1,437	542,553	2	10	11,851	6	11
<i>Endowment Lands.</i>											
Lease in perpetuity	4	1,585	0	0	15	6,384	2	38	14	3	3
Village - homestead special settlement	...	...	...	...	20	100	3	7	14	4	9
Mining districts land-occupation lease	7	276	3	14	83	1,551	2	11	111	12	4
Miscellaneous leases	35	3,538	0	0	355	8,920	0	19	1,266	17	6
Royalty on coal and timber	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	15,811	18	5
Grand totals	399	85,011	0	39	1,910	559,510	8	5	29,070	3	2