Fires both as regards bush and grass have been frequent during the dry season, but the damage done in this district has not been anything like so great as represented in many cases. In fact, in not a few instances bush-burning has been attended with considerable advantage, assisting settlers in clearing their land, and thus paving the way for grass-sowing, &c. It is quite true that there have been cases of hardship, and assistance in providing grass-seed for resowing has been tendered and in a few instances accepted.

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REBATES OF RENT.

From the Table of Rebates it will be seen that the total amount remitted during the year was £3,570 ls. 9d., as against £2,924 4s. 3d. the previous year. Of that amount the sum of £639 13s. 4d. was granted to 1,138 tenants on ordinary Crown lands holding 253,647 acres, and the balance (£2,930 8s. 5d.) to 531 tenants holding 112,473 acres under the Land for Settlements Act. The amount of rebates in respect of the latter class of tenure will necessarily increase year by year as additional estates are opened for selection, the rentals of which are of course much higher than those of ordinary Crown lands.

ARREARS OF RENT.

It must be patent from the fact that the receipts for the year were so largely in excess of the estimate that the amount of outstanding rents is comparatively small. The total amount owing on the 31st March, exclusive of the current half-year, was only £1,382 2s. 8d. for all tenures, £474 13s. 6d. in respect of ordinary Crown lands owing by sixty-nine tenants, and £907 9s. 2d. on account of land for settlements owing by thirty tenants. This is less than the previous year by £327 0s. 5d., notwith-standing the fact that there are now 232 holdings on the books. The granting of rebates is doubtless accountable in a large measure for the smallness of the amount of arrears, which would certainly be smaller still if the same concessions were made in the case of small grazing-runs, as previously pointed out. The percentage of tenants in arrear is 2.5 and the amount owing 1.3 per cent. of the total annual rental.

FORFEITURES AND SURRENDERS.

During the year there were 36 forfeitures and surrenders over a total area of 100,191 acres at an annual rental of £912 1s. 10d., 7 more in number than the previous year, but less in acreage and rental by 85,781 acres and £807 respectively. Of 31 forfeitures, 9 were for non-compliance with conditions as to residence, &c., 21 for non-payment of rent, and 1 for abandonment; and of 5 surrenders, 2 were for subdivisional purposes, 1 for sale of land, 1 for reduction of capital value, and 1 for grouping purposes. The aggregate number, therefore, of forfeitures for breach of conditions is relatively small, and bears favourable comparison with the transactions of former years.

TRANSFERS.

of the various tenures for the past year :—					Number.		Area. Acres.		
Perpetual leases						32	3,672		
Occupation with rig	ght of p	ourchase				14	1,454		
Lease in perpetuity	lands)			7 0	18,003				
,,		for settlen				53	8,785		
Occupation leases (Mining Districts Land Occupation A. () 16							848		
Small grazing-runs				٠		37	132,824		
Pastoral runs						36	1,761,918		
Miscellaneous			• •			39	41,242		
						297	1 968 746		

During 1906-7 the total number of transfers was 229, covering an area of 949,586 acres. There is therefore an increase of sixty-cight transfers during 1907-8, the area dealt with being greater by 1,019,160 acres.

RESERVES, FORESTS, ETC.

An aggregate area of 1,195 acres has been gazetted during the year for various purposes, 39 acres being under "The Scenery Preservation Act, 1903," 988 acres for State forests, and 168 acres for school-sites and other public purposes. A total area of 4,612 acres has now been proclaimed under the Scenery Preservation Act. During the year negotiations were concluded for the purchase of an area of 176 acres situated on the banks of the Taieri River a few miles below Henley. This land was formerly part of the Native reserve, and contains some very handsome bush. The well-known "Maori Leap" forms part of it. In the vicinity of Dunedin the reserves fortunately escaped damage from bush-fires during the recent dry season. The question of fencing off the reserves where necessary is receiving attention, and steps are also being taken to afford easier access to some of the hilltops near the city.

Workers' Dwellings-Windle Settlement.

Altogether twenty houses have been erected, and these have all been occupied at one time or another. At 31st March last eighteen houses were occupied and two were vacant, but since that date one house has been taken, leaving only one vacant house in the settlement. Each house contains five rooms and a bath-room, and the rents range from 10s. 6d. to 11s. 7d. per week, including fire-insurance premium and local rates. There are seven different designs, twelve houses being of one story and eight of two stories. The one-story houses are more popular and let much more readily than the two-story ones.