

depending solely on the maize-crop. I understand that this year there is only 1,846 acres under maize-crop, and of this area 1,160 has been more or less injured by frost—an estimated loss of £1,160.

*Okauia*.—Acquired in February, 1898; of an area of 5,920 acres. The area occupied by roads and reserves is 1,595 acres. There are no sections unlet, and nine selectors hold the whole available area of 4,324 acres, all being resident. The value of the improvements is £622. The bush land now under grass is fairly good, but the remainder of the estate is very medium land; the whole will be held for pasturage purposes only.

*Rangiatea*.—Acquired in June, 1898; of an area of 4,004 acres. 90 acres are absorbed by roads and reserves. There are no sections unlet, and nineteen selectors hold all the available area of 3,914 acres, and these are all resident, the total population numbering eighty-six souls. The improvements effected by selectors since occupation amount to £2,468. The dairy factory close to the settlement has been in full swing, and whilst feed lasted the milk from some 345 cows was sent to the factory by the settlers, but the heavy drought severely affecting the light soil caused a severe shortage of feed, and want of milk almost caused the factory to be closed.

*Karapiro*.—Acquired in October, 1898; of an area of 2,271 acres, the area occupied by roads and reserves being 68 acres. There are no sections unlet, and fifteen selectors hold all the available area of 2,202 acres. There has been no inspection by the Ranger as yet, though it is understood that all selectors are resident. The past dry season has been a poor one also for this settlement, as the settlers all depend upon the milk-factory as a means of livelihood, and the severe drought caused the milk-supply to fall off very early in the summer.

*Encourt*.—Acquired in March, 1900; of an area of 7,105 acres. Area occupied by roads and reserves, 63 acres. Area unlet to date, 2,471 acres. Twenty-five selectors have leased 4,571 acres. This settlement was only opened for selection during the month of March, and, very unfortunately, just before the day of selection a fire ran over the area of reclaimed flax and raupo swamp—some of the best of the land—and destroyed not only the grass, but the whole of the surface, and I am afraid a long time will elapse before the area so destroyed will be applied for.

*Inspection by Crown Rangers*.—Ranger Bayly inspected 447 selections, the total area of which was 121,444 acres. The value of the improvements required amounted to £12,080, the amount actually done being estimated at £41,192; the forest felled south of the Manukau County being roughly 5,500 acres. Ranger H. S. Wilson (in addition to his Forest Ranger duties) has inspected seventy-seven selections, of an area of 18,393 acres. These should have improvements to the value of £9,540, whilst the actual value was found to be only £8,809. This was attributable to six selectors, holding 2,805 acres, having done no improvements. They have accordingly been warned that forfeiture will follow unless the improvements are speedily carried out. 3,000 acres of forest has been cleared in the Counties of Whangarei, Mongonui, Bay of Islands, Whangaroa, Hokianga, and Hobson, and about 2,150 acres has been felled south of Auckland. Ranger D. H. Lusk has inspected some twenty-one holdings, with a total area of 4,257 acres, and found seventeen lessees resident who had fully complied with the improvement conditions. The rest of his time has been spent on forest work.

*Forfeitures and Surrenders*.—The Land Board have very reluctantly had to deal with many cases of forfeiture during the past year, and though the total seems large it is the result and summing-up of arrears allowed to stand over in the hope that selectors could recover themselves, and either fulfil their improvement conditions or pay arrears of rent. The forfeitures number altogether seventy-three, and the surrenders thirty-eight. The analysis gives—Fourteen perpetual-lease holders under "The Land Act, 1885," forfeited 6,715 acres; thirty-eight holders under the occupation-with-right-of-purchase tenure forfeited 10,080 acres; and eighteen holders under lease-in-perpetuity tenure forfeited 3,192 acres; whilst, of the surrenders which are classified under perpetual-lease tenure, six selectors forfeited 2,373 acres. Fourteen holders of occupation-with-right-of-purchase leases surrendered 6,342 acres, and fifteen lease-in-perpetuity holders surrendered 2,485 acres.

*Transfers*.—One hundred and sixty-nine transfers have been granted during the past year, all to *bonâ fide* settlers.

*Forests*.—During the year additional forest reserves, amounting to 65,520 acres, have been gazetted, which include areas around Pirongia, Te Aroha, and Moehau Mountains reserved for scenic purposes, and also near the East Cape, 57,700 acres of which are in this land district. All the ordinary Crown and State forests have had careful supervision. The exceedingly dry summer has been very prolific in fires. The Puhipuhi Forest suffered again, but not to as large an extent as at previous fires. The Omahuta State Forest at Hokianga was also on fire, and some 5,000,000 ft. or 6,000,000 ft. of green kauri has been scorched. In view of this the kauri-trees on a portion of this State forest are now being counted and branded, and will probably be offered by auction at an early date.

A considerable amount of kauri and white-pine timber has been disposed of during the past financial year, the total cash received for the year being £13,181, and the balances still due and spread over further periods amounting to £36,421. Of the first-named sum £3,862 is credited to State forests, the largest sale, and one which created a great deal of interest, being that of the kahikatea or white-pine timber growing upon or adjacent to the Tokatoka Swamp, Northern Wairoa, amounting to nearly 98,000,000 ft. The total price was £24,533, but as the payment is spread over many years the instalment received at the sale only amounted to £1,226 13s. 8d. The balance is to be paid at the rate of one-twentieth each succeeding January. One of the principal conditions of the sale is that the white-pine is to be cut and removed from defined blocks, and these blocks of land when cleared are to be immediately handed over for settlement purposes.