

*Extension of Wairoa Forks Block* (National Endowment land).—This block adjoins the Lee River hereinbefore described, and has the same characteristics. It contains about 7,000 acres.

7 *Upper Aorere Block*—Area, 3,475 acres. Situated in Collingwood County, in the basin of Brown's River and tributaries of the Aorere River, and extends along the bridle-track Aorere to Heaphy River. Forest-clad, principally hilly. Will make good pastoral land. Distant from Collingwood 18½ miles.

#### REPORTS AND INSPECTIONS BY CROWN LANDS RANGERS.

Crown Lands Rangers Harris and Hursthouse have accomplished very valuable work during the year. The evidence of their integrity and tact is afforded by the fact that they enjoy the confidence of the Land Board and of the Crown tenants. The success of a land policy under which the Crown tenancy is increasing yearly depends to a very large extent upon the character of the men whose duty it is to move about amongst the tenants and see that the obligations of the latter to the State are fulfilled. It is but natural that settlers in the backblocks struggling in face of difficulties should resent the application of the law if enforced in a cold, unsympathetic manner; hence the value of the official who combines in his methods the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*.

The reports of Messrs. Harris, Hursthouse, and Wesley are furnished below. Those of the two first-named officers show that 407 properties, comprising an area of 90,064 acres, were visited and inspected during the year. The value of the improvements required by law on these properties is £15,066; the value of the improvements actually made thereon is £40,143. There were 111 defaulters in respect of improvements, and ninety-three in respect of residence conditions. The great majority of the defaulters are in the Buller County, and it is only right to state that a misconception of the statutory period within which improvements had to be effected prevailed in the minds of many tenants in cases where the land had been selected as "unsurveyed."

*Crown Lands Ranger Harris* reports as follows: "During the year I have visited and inspected 162 leasehold sections, covering an area of 66,402 acres. The value of improvements required thereon by law was £12,110; the value of improvements effected was £21,980. The number of defaulters for improvements was forty-one, and for non-residence nineteen. In addition to the inspections I have mentioned an area of 51,800 acres of Crown lands was inspected and reported upon for the Land Board with the view of opening it for selection, and seventy-nine miscellaneous inspections and reports were made respecting land, flax, timber, reserves, &c. In the Collingwood and Takaka Counties three leasehold sections were inspected, covering an area of 1,403 acres. The value of improvements required by law was £425, the value of improvements effected £1,590. The lessees had complied with all conditions of their leases. In Buller and Inangahua Counties forty-four inspections were made, covering an area of 16,620 acres. The value of improvements required by law was £1,998, and the value of improvements effected was £2,456. I found that fifteen lessees had not complied with the improvement conditions of the lease, and that five were non-residents. In Waimea and Sounds Counties 115 inspections were made, covering an area of 48,379 acres. Value of improvements required was £9,686, while the value effected was £17,934. The number of defaulters for non-compliance with the improvement conditions of lease was twenty-six, while fourteen had failed to reside on their land. Speaking generally respecting settlement in this district, I am pleased to be able to state that the Crown tenants and freeholders have prospered during the year, good prices having been obtained for wool, sheep, cattle, and produce, thus encouraging them to get additional areas under cultivation. There was keen competition for all lands opened for selection during the year, and those who were successful at the ballots are very well satisfied with their present position and prospects. I estimate the area of bush lands brought under cultivation during the year to be about 7,000 acres, and I am quite within the limit when I say that 5,000 acres more would have been felled if bushmen could have been obtained. I anticipate a scarcity of bushfellers during the coming season, although high prices are being offered. Bush that would have been felled some three years ago for 15s. per acre now costs £1 5s. However, owing to the general prosperity ruling in the district, settlers are quite willing to give the ruling price for felling, they being so anxious to get their lands brought under cultivation."

Ranger Hursthouse reports that during the year he made 245 inspections of land held on lease in perpetuity, occupation with right of purchase, and Mining Districts Land-occupation Act lease, in Buller County, covering an area of 23,661 acres. The value of improvements required by law was £2,957, while the improvements effected are valued at £18,163. Seventy selectors had not complied with the necessary improvement conditions, and seventy-four had not complied with the residence conditions of their leases. In addition to the inspections above mentioned several inspections have been made respecting flax, timber, and reserves, both for the Land Board and for the Warden.

Ranger Wesley, whose duties are confined to timber-ranging principally, reports that during the year 170 miscellaneous inspections have been made for the Land Board and Warden on matters relating to timber, flax, and coal.

#### REVENUE.

The total gross revenue collected from all sources, including rents from the Westport Harbour Board Endowment and royalties on timber and coal, amounted to £29,070 3s. 2d.—an increase of £3,132 4s. 4d. on the previous year's revenue.

#### REBATES OF RENTAL.

Rebates of rent granted under "The Crown Tenants' Rent Rebate Act, 1900," and "The Land for Settlements Consolidation Act, 1900," during the year amounted to the sum of £70 12s. 7d. Two hundred and twenty-three tenants participated in the grant.