

realized and the average prices per acre are stated in the quarterly returns already furnished; which also show how injuriously the land sales have been affected by the financial difficulties prevailing for the last six months.

Sixty-six persons, whose selections amount in the aggregate to 5,532 acres, have been settled under the deferred-payment system; fifteen selectors in previous years, under the same system, have exchanged their licenses for leases; and ten others have elected to pay the balance-money on their land and become freeholders at once, rather than remain lessees for the remainder of the term.

There are twenty-six holders of pastoral leases, covering an area of 562,632 acres—a considerable reduction from the return of the preceding year; the rents of upwards of 90,000 acres of educational endowments still occupied by runholders having been paid direct to the Education Board, instead of to the Receiver of Land Revenue, as formerly.

No evasions of the law have been reported to the Waste Lands Board.

Returns of Crown grants and leases and licenses issued have already been forwarded in tabular forms. I am not aware that there have been any delays in connection with these; at any rate, no complaints of the kind have reached me.

The total territorial revenue derived from all sources amounts to £78,653 7s. 9d.

The number of sheep returned in Table G was obtained from the Sheep Inspector. The run rents in this district being paid on the acreage occupied, and not in the form of an assessment on the number of cattle depastured, no returns of stock are called for by the Waste Lands Board.

The area of this district originally covered by forest was estimated at 800,000 acres; but no data exist from which it can be ascertained how much of this consists of worthless timber or scrub. After allowing for this, and deducting the fringes of the bush sold to settlers, and the areas already exhausted by saw-mills, I think it may be safely conjectured that at least 400,000 or 500,000 acres of valuable forest land still remain in the hands of the Crown. I know of no cutting by unlicensed persons, or destruction from fire or other causes.

We hear less of the "rabbit pest" than formerly, perhaps because it is now regarded as a matter of course. In the level and more settled districts I believe it has to some extent been reduced by the exertions of the settlers; and many thousands of these vermin were destroyed along the banks of the rivers by the high floods of last spring. In such localities we may safely leave the rabbit to be dealt with by an increasing population. But, in the higher and rougher pastoral districts, occupied solely by the runholder and his employés, I believe there is little or no diminution in their numbers, and in some of the more inaccessible places a positive increase. In such country it will be extremely difficult, and in some parts of it almost impossible, to keep the nuisance within bounds, at all events by any appliances known at present. How far the value of Crown land—that is, its capacity for carrying stock—has been thereby affected would not be easy to determine, because there are other concurrent influences which cannot be eliminated from an estimate, notably the late severe and protracted winter, from which, I am persuaded, more stock perished than from the scarcity of feed occasioned by the increase of rabbits.

WALTER H. PEARSON,

Commissioner of Crown Lands.

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