

from the Owen River to the Maruia, covering an area of 150,000 acres. For many years this portion of Nelson district was looked upon as useless except for mining or scenic purposes, but now it is winning its way into favour as a desirable place for settlement. Expectations respecting its capabilities for pastoral purposes when cleared have been fully realised. The results achieved by the pioneer selectors afford a stimulus to further improvement. The grass-producing qualities of the land in an ordinarily good season are surprising—the growth is prolific. For both cattle-raising and sheep-grazing country, and, at a later date, dairying, I doubt if there is better in the Dominion. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that in a few years, with improved facilities for transit by railway to Port Nelson and the establishing of the Nelson freezing-works on a firm basis, an increase of the producing population and in flocks and herds may be relied upon.

The progress which has marked the recently established settlements in Nelson is having its effect in many directions upon the older settled portions of this district. The advent of new settlers on Crown and private lands with new ideas has done much to improve the methods of cultivation formerly obtaining. Farmers are moving off the old track—they are commencing to utilise the land to the best advantage. The ancient prejudice against scientific farming is dying. The establishing of freezing-works is the latest indication of the spirit of enterprise amongst the farming community. The fact that an ocean liner has berthed at Nelson wharf, and taken 15,000 carcasses of frozen mutton, is evidence that the possibilities of the district are becoming seriously realised.

#### LANDS PROPOSED TO BE OPENED DURING 1909–10.

It is proposed to offer for sale or selection during the current year an area of 51,900 acres of unsurveyed lands. The following are brief descriptions of the blocks:—

*Howard Block* (27,000 acres ordinary Crown lands and 3,000 acres National Endowment).—This block contains about 30,000 acres of forest country, above the average in quality. Twenty thousand acres of the area stretches over the basin of the Howard River; the balance, 3,000 acres, comprises the basins of several streams flowing into the Buller River. Situate within ten miles of the Hope Junction, on the main coach-road Nelson to Westport.

*Extension of Lee River Block* (National Endowment).—This block contains about 5,500 acres, and is practically an extension of the Lee River Block already disposed of. The land is rough and hilly, forest-clad, but suitable for sheep-grazing when stripped. It has a special value in that it is situated in Waimea County (where freezing-works are now in operation), thirty miles from the City of Nelson.

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

*Anatoki Block* (National Endowment).—This block is situated in the Takaka County, about four miles and a half from the Port of Waitapu, and about three miles and a half from the Village of Takaka. It contains 4,400 acres of hilly forest-clad land, principally birch intermixed with scattered rimu.

*Waimea Block* (ordinary Crown lands).—This block contains about 5,000 acres. It is situate at the head-waters of the Serpentine and Miner Creeks, about twenty-three miles from the City of Nelson. The country comprises undulating and broken land, suitable for grazing when cleared and sown.

#### INSPECTIONS BY CROWN LANDS RANGERS.

The Crown Lands Rangers inspected 492 holdings during the year. The area inspected covers 195,615 acres. The value of the improvements required is £23,688. The value of the improvements actually made is £44,671. Eleven hundred acres of forest was felled on lands selected during the year; 8,400 acres was felled during the year on lands selected in previous years. The total area felled on Crown leaseholds up to 31st March, 1909, is 50,617 acres.

The Crown Lands Ranger who inspected the northern portion of the district reports as follows: During the year 1908–9 I visited and inspected 366 leasehold sections in North Nelson, comprising an area of 170,561 acres. The value of improvements required thereon by law was £21,399, and the value effected £38,303. Eighty-five selectors had not complied with the improvement conditions of their leases, and twenty-five were non-resident. In addition to the above, I inspected and reported, for the information and guidance of the Land Board and Warden, on 27,000 acres. I also made sixty-four miscellaneous inspections and reports respecting timber, flax, reserves, &c.

Regarding settlement in this district, it has undoubtedly progressed during the past year, both as regards freehold and Crown lands. The demand for freehold land has not been so keen as in former years, while that for Crown lands has been very marked. As each block has been thrown open for selection the applications in most cases covered more than the area available, and those that were successful have already begun to improve their holdings. No doubt this fresh enterprise is due to the freezing-works which have been established in the district. These works were completed at the end of January, and since that date sixteen thousand sheep have been frozen, thus giving the farmers splendid encouragement to cultivate their lands and improve their stock, to command a better price and compete with other districts. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that this district has a big future before it, and during the course of a few years it will be very productive. Land has been opened up more speedily these last few years, and wherever opened up good roads have been made thereto.

During my visits of inspection to Central Buller I have observed improvement in the cultivation of the land. Where a few years ago nothing more than forest-clad hills were visible, now for miles in extent it is all down in English grasses, homesteads have been erected, and other improvements effected. During the past year about 6,200 acres of bush lands have been felled and the area grassed, and I anticipate a much larger area this coming year.