

## THE TAIRAWHITI MAORI LAND BOARD.

The area within Cook County shown in the schedule as vested in this Board is 2,325 acres, and the whole is leased.

Speaking generally of the Board, the area of land vested in it is as follows :—

						Acres.
Cook County	..	..	..	..	..	2,325
Waiapu County	..	..	..	..	..	20,963
Wairoa County	..	..	..	..	..	26,033
Whakatane County	..	..	..	..	..	3,900
Total	..	..	..	..	..	53,221

With the exception of Maungawaru No. 4, the Board has had the lands vested in it surveyed and valued and prepared for settlement, and it is hoped that the lands will be on the market before the bushfelling season is much advanced. The Board will set apart portions for leasing to Maoris only.

In addition, the Board has been appointed receiver of revenue in blocks recently leased with its approval, amounting to 34,172 acres, the bulk of which is in the Waiapu County.

The Board has approved of leases of lands as follows :—

						Acres.
Cook County	..	..	..	..	..	29,434
Waiapu County	..	..	..	..	..	35,375
Wairoa County	..	..	..	..	..	8,564
Total	..	..	..	..	..	73,373

There are pending applications for approval to leases of an area of 3,204 acres. The term of most of the leases is twenty-one years, and some twenty-one years with right of renewal for a further term of twenty-one years. The Board appears to have exercised great care in seeing that the leases are in compliance with the law.

We note that in leasing to Europeans it is usual in this district to incorporate the owners of the lands proposed to be leased. After incorporation the elected committee takes the necessary steps for leasing, and would-be lessees find that instead of dealing with numerous and scattered owners they can conduct business with a compact committee of from three to seven, who can give them a valid title. If in addition to the present law relating to incorporated blocks the committees were required to sell the leases by auction, this system of alienation would be an excellent one. It is expeditious; it is growing in popularity with the Maoris; it secures to negotiators a guarantee of title and the minimum of expense in conducting negotiations. We reserve for a general report further remarks on this mode of alienation.

## LANDS UNDER LEASE.

The return in the Sixth Schedule (A) of lands under leases approved by the Board is complete up to the date of this report. As to other leases in the Sixth Schedule (B), the information is not complete. We are making further inquiries with a view to completing this return as far as possible, and will render a statement in a supplementary report.

We note that Mangatu No. 3 Block, of 3,680 acres, and Mangatu No. 4, of 6,000 acres, are vested in the same Trustees that administer Mangatu No. 1. Mangatu No. 3 was leased by auction in 1901 on the same terms as the subdivisions of Mangatu No. 1 already referred to.

The present annual rental is £81 15s. 8d., increasing to £122 13s. 4d. during the next seven years, and to £163 11s. 1d. for the last seven years of the current term. Mangatu No. 4 has not been leased, but there is a proposal to borrow £5,000 for the purpose of improving and working it as a farm for the owners.