

up and planting, or sowing root or other crops therein; and in the case of bush-lands, the felling and clearing of timber and sowing of grass. No person who has an interest in any land of more than an acre in extent in the colony is eligible as a selector under these regulations. A selector can only hold one section, and cannot subdivide or sublet it, though he may transfer it with the consent of the Commissioner of Crown Lands for his district. It may be as well to explain here that the Commissioner of Crown lands, under the New Zealand system, is a Civil servant. The colony is divided into ten provincial land districts, viz: Southland, Otago, Canterbury, Westland, Marlborough, Nelson, Wellington, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, and Auckland, and each of these is in charge of a Commissioner of Crown Lands. The Commissioner has also power to forfeit a settler's interest in a village homestead block upon non-compliance with the conditions of the law.

SUSPENSION OF VILLAGE HOMESTEAD SPECIAL SETTLEMENTS.

These conditions began to operate in June, 1886, when the Hon. J. Ballance was Minister of Lands, and were suspended in a short time by the Atkinson Government, under the circumstances which are stated elsewhere. It is understood, however, that the Ballance Government, who have lately resumed office, are favourably considering the question of extending the system upon a reorganized basis. When the scheme was discontinued such parts of the land set aside for it as had not been taken up under it were offered under the other conditions of village settlement holdings. Such holdings as were either abandoned or forfeited were also in most cases dealt with under other conditions. These facts cause a little complication in estimating the extent and effect of the scheme, but the figures which I have quoted were obtained from official sources, and are as near to absolute accuracy as it is possible to make them.

NARRATIVE OF THE VISIT.

Southland District.

I left Adelaide on the 19th January, sailed from Melbourne on the 20th January, and, having called at Hobart in the meantime, arrived at the Bluff (Campbelltown) on Sunday evening, the 25th January. The Bluff is the southernmost point of the Middle Island, New Zealand, and, with Stewart's Island, at the other side of Foveaux Strait, is included in the Land District of Southland. The Bluff is the point whence the produce of Southland is exported. The meat-freezing works are close to the jetty, and the growing trade in this industry has had the effect of materially improving the prosperity of the surrounding district, especially by stimulating stock-raising. The land between the Bluff and Invercargill, a distance of seventeen miles, is generally swampy and poor. At Invercargill the central land-office for the district is situated, and here, as in all other land districts which were visited, opportunity was taken to closely question the principal officers and obtain statistics in reference to the special subject of inquiry. The Commissioner of Crown lands (Mr. J. Spence) was absent at Wellington at the time of the visit, but the Receiver of Land Revenue (Mr. J. S. Royds) and the Crown Lands Ranger (Mr. H. G. Mussen) supplied all necessary information. This district is not specially favourable for the village settlement system, there being a scarcity of available Crown lands. Several very small settlements were, however, started, the principal being Seaward Bush, about three miles from Invercargill. Here there are some forty settlers who are entitled to the advance system, having applied prior to its discontinuance. The price paid for the land is about £5 per acre, and the soil is officially described as generally very fair. The largest of the blocks is a little over 33 acres, but few of them are more than 10 acres. Some of the houses, upon which £20 was advanced, cost about £27 or £28. This money was paid on the certificate of the Ranger, who in this district seems to take a strong personal interest in the system. As the experiment is so small, it is hardly necessary to go into particulars in reference to it, beyond stating that the settlement seems to have reasonable prospects of success. The Ranger stated that many of the men who now live on the blocks had no money to commence with, and that the Commissioner of Crown Lands allowed them to give orders for the materials for the house to local merchants, who generally were willing to run the risk of the men putting up the cottages, and thus securing for them payment from the Government. The houses of the settlers in this district, as well as practically throughout the whole colony, are of wooden material, and therefore cheaper than a building of more durable substance would be. The land here is chiefly devoted to grazing a cow or two for the supply of the family with milk, besides perhaps a little for sale. The land is also used for growing vegetables for the house and root crops for the cattle. The coldness of the climate, however, with other considerations, makes this district hardly suitable for anything like an extensive operation of the system. The holders cannot, for instance, grow fruit, and a number of other things which would ripen in a warmer climate would not ripen here. The average cereal yield of this and the adjoining district of Otago (combined) is—wheat, about 29 bushels; oats, about 26 bushels; and barley, about 30 bushels. The mean annual rainfall of the Southland District is 43·674 in. The Ranger stated that in one way the system is specially appreciated here, because it provides a man with a home (free from rent) in which he has an opportunity of using his spare time. That is a matter of some consequence in a district where work is somewhat spasmodic during the winter season. The holders are chiefly labourers in the sawmills and other places, and in winter they all have a very slack time. When some of the settlements were opened inadequate access was provided, and the Government made special arrangements with the settlers by which they constructed roads, both for their own convenience and for the general benefit of the community, and the work was done at a somewhat lower rate than would have had to be paid under ordinary conditions. Some of the holders of these special settlement blocks are women; but a man is not allowed to take one block and his wife another.

I travelled through the centre of the Southland District to obtain an idea of the general condition of the country. The distance to the foot of the mountains in the north is about fifty miles. About eight miles from Invercargill is the special village settlement of Makarewa; but this is on a much smaller scale than even that of Seaward Bush. The intermediate land is generally very good. Much of it has been thickly covered with bush, which has been cleared, with a large amount of labour. There does not seem to be a great area under cereals, and those that are grown are principally oats,