

system, as it is mostly bush-covered, and does not allow of the selection of sites for the settlement in localities where settlers may readily obtain work.

From Dunedin to Timaru the railway generally keeps close to the sea, and for a considerable part of the distance the country is rough and hilly with only small patches of cultivation. Near Palmerston, forty-one miles from Dunedin, the prospect opens out, and there are some good fields of wheat. The oat-crops were poor owing to the unusually dry season. Around Oamaru, seventy-eight miles from Dunedin and 152 miles from Christchurch, the land is of excellent quality, stretching from the sea to the hills. This district is celebrated alike for the special qualities of its building-stone, and for its prolific yield of superior varieties of potatoes, large fields of which can be seen from the railway-line. At the port of Oamaru a breakwater has been formed by the Harbour Board. Large freezing-works have been established, and steamers call for the direct export of the meat to England, some of the vessels carrying as many as 50,000 carcasses in their cold-chambers. A little distance north of Oamaru the country becomes very level, consisting of fine pasture-land, used generally for sheep-grazing. Between this and Timaru, the Waitaki River, a very large stream, is crossed. This forms the boundary of the Land Districts of Canterbury and Otago, and the fertile alluvium is occupied by crops of potatoes and fields of cereals.

Canterbury District.

At Timaru, 131 miles from Dunedin, and ninety-one miles from Christchurch, a large and extensive breakwater has been erected to facilitate the shipment of the produce of the back-country. Several extensive roller flour-mills have been established in the town, which is the outlet of one of the most fertile wheat-producing areas in New Zealand. Frozen meat is also exported hence. In the District of Canterbury the average rainfall at the central point (Christchurch) is 25·774in. Here the first experiment on anything like an extensive scale has been made with the village homestead special settlements. The Crown Lands Ranger for the district, Mr. J. E. March, who had been despatched by the Commissioner of Crown Lands at Christchurch, met the party here and travelled for several days with us. During the time he accompanied me he supplied me with much valuable information, and I wish to express my special appreciation of Mr. March's energetic efforts to give the fullest possible opportunity for inspection of the different settlements. Mr. March has had extensive experience of the system, and is an enthusiastic believer in it, if it be conducted under proper conditions. From Timaru we drove to Beaconsfield, a few miles to the south-west. The pleasantly undulating country over which we passed was splendidly suited to agriculture. The ground was covered with verdure, and the landscape was varied by heavy fields of wheat, oats, potatoes, and turnips. Turnips are used as winter feed for stock, of which large numbers appear to be kept. There seemed to be an air of lasting prosperity about the homesteads and farms in this portion of the colony, and the picturesqueness of the locality has been enhanced by the planting of thick clumps of trees, a work undertaken by the County Council and by farmers. The trees have thriven, and greatly add to the attractiveness of the plains, which were originally bare and treeless. At Beaconsfield I inspected the settlement, which has an area of 392 acres. This land is not held under the special "advance" conditions, but under the ordinary village settlement regulations, which are somewhat analogous to our own homestead block system. I inspected a number of the places, and conversed with the occupiers. Some of the blocks are used to the best advantage, with the result that the persons upon them, who were previously mostly labourers without capital, are possessed of a comfortable home. Other blocks are almost as unimproved as they were on the day when they were taken up. In this and other places the difference between individuals with practically the same circumstances is clearly shown. This settlement was opened in 1883, and it has now thirty-two settlers, the areas held by them varying from 5 acres to 20 acres, and the average price paid per acre being £12, though some blocks go as high as £15. Some of the land is used for grazing only, whilst other parts of it are applied to the growing of fruit and vegetables. Most of the produce is used to help in the support of the family, the remainder being, if possible, sold. Some few of the people who apply themselves to the task of improving their blocks seem to be doing fairly well by dint of hard work. Returning to Timaru, we went by train to Temuka, about 11 miles distant, and thence drove through the principal of the village settlements, beginning at Arowhenua, three miles from Temuka. The history of this village settlement is specially interesting. During the years 1873 and 1874 a very large number of immigrants were introduced into the district, and all public buildings were taken up for their accommodation. A good proportion of the men were at Temuka, and the Hon. Mr. Rolleston, who was then Superintendent of Immigration, adopted a plan which resulted in the establishment of Arowhenua. The reserve (now known as the Arowhenua Village Settlement) was surveyed into quarter and half-acre sections. The men were placed under the charge of two foremen (who had a thorough knowledge of sod work), and under their direction a number of sod cottages were erected by the men working in a body. No man knew what place he would occupy until after they were all finished, when lots were drawn and the huts apportioned accordingly. These huts cost the Government about £10 each. The men were allowed to live in them for three years, the first year rent free, and at a rental of 2s. per week for the two following years. The rent was duly paid, and the men continued to occupy the cottages after the two years had expired, paying rent at the same rate during that period. Steps were then taken to allow the settlers to acquire the freehold on which their huts stood. The price fixed for the land was £30 per acre, payment extending over a period of five years. Most of the original huts have now disappeared, and many of the settlers have sold out and taken up larger blocks of land. A number of the blocks have been used for fruit- and vegetable-growing, and a thriving village has been formed. The immediate drawback, however, is over-production. In some cases (I was informed by the settlers) the fruit dropped off their trees last year, because they could not get rid of it by sale. The object of this settlement was not so much to enable the men to live on the produce of the land as to provide a home for them, and the houses naturally seem to be appreciated by them. In this neighbourhood there are half a dozen blocks of an acre each, occupied under the special village settlement conditions. Some of the land is of first-class quality, with streams running through it. The capital value of the blocks is fixed at £30 per acre, or £1 10s. per acre rent, in addition to the