

have not the advantage of the advances. A good deal of hop-growing and gardening—the fruit being utilised in the local manufacture of jams—is done in the district; and the settler thus has the advantage of dealing with constantly and readily marketable products. Dairying and sheep-grazing are also engaged in.

*Wellington District.*

Having concluded my observations on the Middle Island, I left Nelson for Wellington, the capital of the colony, 370 miles by sea from Greymouth. The city shows satisfactory signs of progression, and an increasing disposition to centralise the mercantile business here appears apparent. At this place I had conversations with the Premier (Hon. J. Ballance), the ex-Premier (Sir H. Atkinson), the Native Minister (Hon. A. J. Cadman), and, amongst others, the permanent heads of the Lands Department, both State and provincial. The position of the two gentlemen first named in connection with the special settlement system has been the subject of comment in our Parliament, and I have thought it well to include in the summary appended to this report the gist of their statements. The general bearing of the remarks of the officials who had had most to do with the village special settlements in Wellington District was to the effect that, where suitable men had been placed upon suitable land, with access to market, success had been secured; but comparative failure in the absence of those conditions. At the inception of the system there was evidence that a good many of the men who applied for blocks in part of this district—Pahiatua, for instance—never went upon the land. In the Wellington Land District (in which were 133 blockholders, with an area of 1,836 acres) difficulty had been experienced in getting arrears of rent from a number of the settlers. In some cases forfeiture had had to be enforced, and reductions of rent had been asked for in certain localities. Before leaving the capital for an inspection of some of the settlements in this district I accepted an invitation to visit the Wellington Woollen Factory and the Gear Meat-freezing and -preserving Works at Petone, seven miles from Wellington. I was accompanied by Mr. Cadman (the Native Minister), Mr. T. K. Macdonald (one of the members for Wellington in the House of Representatives), and Mr. N. Reid (chairman of the Gear Company). The operations in both establishments are of a most interesting character. The Gear Company conduct their works upon a very extensive scale. Not only is meat frozen and preserved by canning, but a great deal of tallow is exported, and a fellmongery as well as manure-works are associated with the establishment, which is successful financial and otherwise. The woollen factory also turns out a varied and excellent class of goods, and is likewise a financial success.

Proceeding northward, I left Wellington for Eketahuna. Upon this course, the railway passes over the Rimutaka Range, where, near the Summit station (thirty-five miles from Wellington), the train makes a descent on a gradient which in some places is as steep as 1 in 15. In addition to the ordinary line, a centre rail is provided. This is gripped by wheels on the special "Fell" engines, so as to secure greater break restraint upon the train, whilst, should the carriages get beyond control in spite of all other precautions, they can be run on to an ascending siding, which speedily brings the train to a standstill. From Wellington to this point the line does not traverse much good agricultural country, and bush-covered hills prevail. The land in the Wairarapa district, however, improves. Around Masterton (seventy-one miles from Wellington) and Mauriceville (a Scandinavian settlement, twelve miles further on, where also is one of the special village homestead settlement areas) more cultivation is noticeable, although the pastoral is still the prevailing industry. Eketahuna is the present terminus of the railway from Wellington (ninety-eight miles). It forms part of the country known as the Forty-mile Bush, and around it are a number of village settlements, held under ordinary conditions. The occupiers have done a great deal of heavy clearing work, the bush throughout the district for a great many miles being exceedingly dense. Thence I drove sixteen miles to Pahiatua, through country which has been cleared comparatively recently, and which is now devoted almost entirely to grazing. This work of clearing has proceeded at a very rapid rate since the extension of the frozen-meat trade has enabled the land to be held profitably for sheep-grazing. I was informed that during the last twelve months in this district more than 20,000 acres of the bush had been cut down, the cost of this work amounting to about £2 or £1 10s an acre. We saw immense quantities of felled timber awaiting a favourable opportunity for a "burn," which is of the utmost consequence to the settler; but, as the summer had been very wet—the conditions of the season having been exactly the very reverse here, as well as in Westland, to those at Canterbury—it was very doubtful whether the "burn" would be obtained until next year. After the bush has been burnt off the land is immediately sown with English grasses and clover, and in a few months afterwards sheep and cattle may be grazed upon it. I was assured that this land will carry, on an average, from three to eight sheep to the acre all the year round. This area is used only for grazing, as the expense of clearing the land of stumps and logs, and making it fit for cultivation, would be so great as to render the operation unprofitable. It is evident, however, judging by a few small orchards which I saw in the district—especially on the smaller holdings—that the harder kinds of fruits may be grown extensively. At Pahiatua I was met by Mr. R. H. Reaney, chief surveyor in the district, who drove me through the special village settlement in the locality. This place, which has an area of 765 acres, held by seventy-three settlers, is in the midst of dense bush-land, and a great deal of work has been done in clearing and timber-burning. The holdings cannot be used for some years, except for grazing and gardening on a small scale, on account of the drawbacks previously mentioned. In the meantime a home is provided on the land for the lessee's family; a little roadwork was done at first, a cow is kept, and a few vegetables are grown for home use, and possibly for sale now and again to the neighbours. The husband goes out to work, chiefly at tree-felling for the neighbouring graziers, or in road-making, as none of the blocks is sufficient to wholly support a man and his family. Indeed, here, as in other settlements, some of the holders complain that the blocks (which average about 12 acres in this district) are too small. A lot of the blockholders, not satisfied with the perpetual-lease conditions, are trying to get titles in fee-simple, and, according to the best evidence, if they should succeed they would speedily be bought out by the larger holders. The rent paid by them varies from 5s. to 2s. per acre, in addition to the interest upon the advances for house, &c. This settlement at Pahiatua is one of the principal in the North Island, all the blocks being occupied. From this place I drove to Woodville, ten miles