

distant, and three miles from the famous Manawatu Gorge. There is another settlement here under conditions similar to those just described. I was met at Woodville by the Minister of Lands (Hon. J. McKenzie), who had remained here a day so as to have the opportunity of meeting me (as he had been absent from Wellington), and exchanging information relative to the land systems of our respective colonies. At this point I wish to specially acknowledge the assistance which the Minister rendered to me during my journey, particularly by instructing the officials at the land offices throughout the colony to give me all the information in their possession concerning the subject of my inquiries. Woodville is a comparatively older settlement. The space now occupied by the borough has been literally "carved out of the dense bush." Very little cultivation is done, sheep-breeding and dairying being the uses to which the land is generally applied.

The latest available summary of figures relative to the special settlements in the Wellington Land District is made up to the 31st March, 1889, which is after the operation of the system had been suspended. From the details supplied to me I find that 139 holdings had been taken up in the Wellington District out of the 1,196 then held under the system in the whole colony. The area selected by the 139 persons represented a total of 1,945 acres. Of the original settlers 120 remained on the land and nineteen had transferred to other holders; eighty-seven were resident and fifty-two non-resident; twenty of the original settlers threw up their holdings. Of the 1,945 acres 1,400 were cultivated, all but 20 acres being in grass, and eighteen of that twenty in garden. The total advances amounted to £4,855; £252 was spent in roadworks, and £18 in fares, &c. The yearly rental payable by the settlers to the Government, including interest on advances, was £383, and the total sum paid to the date of the return in rent was £386, besides £141 interest on advances, or, together, £527 from the adoption of the scheme.

On the way to Wanganui I drove through the famous Manawatu Gorge, the upper end of which is about three miles from Woodville. The passage through the Gorge is four miles in length, and the road runs along a steep shelf cut out of the mountain side over the River Manawatu, and so narrow as to leave room for only one vehicle. A railway has been constructed through the Gorge at very great expense, but its opening had been delayed in consequence of heavy landslips making the use of the line impracticable. On the way to Palmerston North, ten miles from the Gorge, one drives over level country well suited to, and much used for, grazing. Here we took the train for Wanganui, 158 miles from Wellington, the track further on proceeding through territory in which was done some of the fiercest fighting in the Maori wars. The line crosses alternately level an undulating land, which, having been cleared of bush, represents valuable holdings. Some of the soil is very rich, and this is gradually being turned to account for dairying and agriculture. The pastoral industry, however, is still the staple. Horse and cattle-breeding are done, but sheep pay best, and the tendency is for the farms to become larger in order to accommodate the stock. I was assured that much of this soil, when sown with English grasses, carries from three to ten sheep to the acre, and that the grass does not require renewing for a number of years. Many of the cattle raised here are exported to other parts of New Zealand, more especially to the mining districts in Westland. Mount Egmont is a remarkable natural feature in the Wanganui country on the way to New Plymouth (107 miles). In appearance it is one of the most imposing mountains in New Zealand, as it stands alone, is 8,300ft. high, and is an almost perfect cone, with perpetual snow on its top. It has a considerable influence upon the rainfall of the Taranaki Land District, of which the River Wanganui forms part of the dividing-line bounding the Wellington Land District. The registered rainfall is 58·084in. Almost numberless streams run down at the foot of the mount, fertilising the surrounding land, some of which is the best in the whole colony, especially for grazing. Most of it has been cleared of exceedingly dense bush. The felling of bush in many parts of the North Island has proceeded at an enormous rate.

Taranaki District.

At New Plymouth, where there is an extensive and expensive breakwater, I obtained some information at the Land Office, in the absence of the Commissioner, from the Receiver of Land Revenue, Mr. A. Trimble, and from other sources. This place was principally settled by Devonshire families, who went there fifty years ago, and still live on small holdings, carrying on dairying operations and farming, but evidently not making much progress. As most of these settlers are not able to employ labour or purchase produce, having enough of their own, the experiments made with the special village settlements in the district have not been successful. This result may be partly due to the fact that some of the settlements were apparently opened in the bush without adequate means of communication. One called Makaka was started twelve miles from Stratford, the nearest town in the country, watered by the River Kaupokonui. Three hundred acres were offered in blocks of from 50 acres downward, but no application was received. Afterwards one block of 50 acres was taken up, but the settler did not apply for the advance, and, unless he should speedily comply with the conditions of the lease, the officers of the Land Department will be bound to forfeit his holding. This is the only piece of land held under the village special settlement system in Taranaki. Two other settlements were opened under the same system—185 acres of open land at Warea, in blocks varying from 1½ to 25 acres, at a rental of 3s. per acre; and twenty-seven sections of bush-land, from 12 to 19 acres, at Punehu, at from 1s. to 2s. per acre, this being the only one which was near to a township; but none of the blocks were taken up. This failure is mentioned because it may have its useful lesson in considering the general question.

Auckland District.

From New Plymouth I went by steamer to Onehunga (155 miles), and thence by railway to Auckland (eight miles). In the City of Auckland are the land offices controlling the land business over the extensive district of the same name, stretching from the North Cape to the boundaries of Taranaki, Wellington, and Hawke's Bay. The rainfall at Auckland itself is 45·306, but the large area in the district naturally provides great variations. As I had heard in many directions, both in New Zealand and elsewhere, of the failures of the special-settlement system in this district, and that the experiences here had been the chief cause of the suspension of the system, I made