

practicable, full advantage is taken of the opportunity of this money-making, if very arduous, industry. There, too, the back roads require to be widened for cart traffic. Proposals have been made to start sawmills in this locality. These would employ much labour, and they would also aid settlers by payment to them of royalty on timber utilised. The settlers in the farm-homestead blocks situated in the southern portion of this district are all doing well, and are complying in a satisfactory manner with the conditions of the Land Act. The residents in the Salisbury Block have raised loans, and the whole of the bridle-tracks have been widened for wheel traffic. This will enable the settlers to start creameries, and thereby obtain cash payments regularly by the disposal of milk, which would insure the permanence and prosperity of the district. The Awarua Block generally is reported to have been taken up by a good class of settlers, who have felled large areas of land year by year, besides effecting other improvements of considerable value. As the roads are being formed rapidly, and a bridge has been erected over the Moawhango River on the Torere Road, the progress of the district should be accelerated. Steady progress is being made in the nineteen village settlements, comprising 4,071 acres, in this district, and, on the whole, the settlers appear to be doing well; but in a few instances, where the holdings are too small and situated in out-of-the-way localities remote from markets, the settlers have a hard struggle. Wherever opportunity offers small holdings under such circumstances have been grouped so as to strengthen and give the remaining settlers a better chance of attaining success. The most progressive settlements are those of Horowhenua and Levin, due in part to the splendid situation of the land. The villagers in the Makohine, Mangaweka, and Taihape Settlements find employment principally on the railway co-operative works, and are gradually improving their holdings. The proposed dairy factory at Taihape and a creamery at Utiku should prove a great assistance to the surrounding villagers and other settlers. Even in the far distant Raetihi Settlement the holdings are being well improved.

In the Wairarapa district 817 ordinary and 228 special inspections of holdings were made by Rangers Kavanagh and Buckhurst, on which the usual reports were furnished; also, valuations were made of numerous selections, comprising 9,460 acres, in addition to supervising the working and milling of timber on three blocks, having to check the quantities cut and estimate the amounts of royalty payable to the Crown. Out of the 817 Crown tenants' holdings inspected, there were only thirty-one defaulters as to improvements, and ninety-six as to residence. The majority of the former are believed to be *bona fide* settlers, and have either effected the required improvements or will do so very shortly. Regarding the non-residents, a few have complied since inspection, several are preparing to do so, and to a considerable number reasonable time has been granted by the Land Board to enable them to make arrangements to comply with the conditions of the Land Act; the small residue are reported as being unable to comply owing to their business ties and other circumstances. These latter persons in most cases are endeavouring to transfer their holdings. The value of the improvements upon the area inspected by the Ranger reaches the total of £169,302, which is about £112,000 in excess of the statutory requirements. As to the whole district, a large area of bush was felled during the year, and those settlers who burned late in the season obtained good results; but, unfortunately, those who fired early failed to do so. Generally speaking, good burns were secured throughout the district, with the exception of the slopes of the Puketoi Ranges, which locality is noted for the extreme humidity of its climate. Shearing operations were likewise delayed by wet weather, but on the other hand grass-seeding was carried on under most favourable conditions. The past season is stated to have been the best experienced for years in the Forty-mile Bush, where there was a prolific growth of grass, the result of which is that the stock is in good condition, high prices for the same being still maintained. A noticeable feature of the improvements which have been so rapidly carried out in the bush districts is the increasing area brought under the plough. The operations of stumping and ploughing to enlarge this area are being continued. The expansion of the dairying industry has been remarkable, the output being larger and the prices the highest hitherto obtained; the farmers generally are reported as admitting having had a good and prosperous year. There only remain twenty-four holdings, aggregating an area of 3,278 acres, under the special-settlement system of "The Land Act, 1885," in this district. All the selectors have practically complied with the conditions of the Act, and the land, which is situated in the Survey Districts of Makuri, Mangahao, Mangaone, and Tararua, is reckoned amongst the most valuable in the county. The sixteen farm-homestead blocks, comprising 186 holdings and an area of 33,154 acres, had 125 out of 171 selectors residing. The improvements on each settlement are in excess of the legal requirements, and in some instances very largely so. Except in the distant and more inaccessible settlements the holdings are, as a rule, well stocked; those which have fair access and are situated within reasonable distance of dairy factories have achieved success by giving their attention to dairying, and may be looked upon as well established with every prospect of a prosperous future. The drawbacks of remoteness from railway and centres of settlement will gradually disappear as the road systems are extended into the heart of the country and the settlers increase the area of cultivated land. The village settlements in every case show that a very large surplus over the amount of improvements required under the Act has been effected. The settlers are industrious, struggling working-men, with some tradesmen, small contractors, gardeners, old men, and widows, who have taken advantage of the system to secure homes. In convenient situations where other conditions are favourable the holdings are well improved, stocked, and utilised to advantage. Except in out-of-the-way positions the residential conditions have been complied with. On the whole the success of the village is assured, except in a few instances where the holdings are small and do not materially aid the selector and his family in deriving a living.

Lands for Settlement.

In addition to Paparangi at Johnsonville, which was settled the previous year, the Te Matua and Ohakea Settlements were opened for selection at the end of December, 1899; the whole of