

continue to pay most attention to the raising and fattening of sheep, cropping being only a secondary consideration. This estate—the success of which for some time was doubtful—may now be considered to have crossed the border-line, and has a prospect of being declared and classed as a successful venture.

*Omaka Settlement.*—Area, 3,898 acres; opened for selection in 1896. There are thirteen tenants on this estate, holding areas varying from 157 to 640 acres. The value of improvements effected by the occupiers is estimated at £4,792. Four lessees were defaulters, having failed to come up to the required amount for the sixth year of occupation; but these will probably comply during the current year. All are fulfilling the residential conditions. The crops this year were light, but good market prices for what was harvested compensated a little. Wheat was grown on 276 acres (an average result of 13 bushels per acre), oats on 263 acres, barley on 129 acres, rye on 27 acres, and roots on 131 acres; carrots and onions were grown in small quantities of good quality. The stock consists of 3,100 sheep, 30 head of cattle, 37 horses, and a few pigs. The lambing resulted in about 90 per cent. With one exception all the settlers appear to be doing moderately well. The population now consists of forty-seven souls, living in twelve dwellinghouses. There is a school, which is well attended; good roads to every section, also to the market-town, where every product grown finds ready sale.

*Richmond Brook Settlement*, consisting of 5,669 acres, was opened for selection in 1899. It is occupied by eleven selectors, nine of whom reside, who, with their families, make up a population of twenty-eight souls. The improvements effected at the time of inspection were valued at £4,036, being £2,636 in excess of the amount demanded by law. Nine dwellinghouses have been erected of a substantial character; also stables, sheds, and the usual buildings which are necessary to make up a homestead in working-order. The stock owned by the tenants consists of 6,000 sheep, 40 horses, and 30 head of cattle. Grain was successfully grown on 140 acres, and roots on 150 acres, and 300 acres was laid down in grass. The satisfactory average of 90 per cent. of lambs was obtained, most of which found their way to the Picton Freezing-works. This settlement also feels the benefit of the railway to Seddon, and the stock can be sent away in one day in lieu of four in the past. The roads are all in good order, and, providing present prices are maintained, the settlers should be soon in a healthy prosperous condition.

*Starborough Settlement*, opened for selection in 1899, comprises fifty-seven holdings, of an aggregate area of 34,770 acres, and the Township of Seddon. The past year has been, in spite of unseasonable weather experienced in the spring and early summer, a fairly prosperous one for the farmers. The primitive dwellings on the estate have given place to houses of a permanent and imposing character, and the homesteads are assuming a cosy and prosperous appearance, with the embellishment of pretty gardens and plantations, giving the settlement the look of maturity. The estimated value of improvements effected, including the Township of Seddon, is £27,710—far beyond the requirements of the Act. There is not one defaulter in this respect, and only two for residential conditions. The settlers' stock consists of 36,000 sheep, 226 head of cattle, 200 horses, and about 100 pigs. From this and the neighbouring estates, Blind River and Richmond Brook, 26,000 fat sheep and lambs have been sent away, nearly all to Picton. There was not a large area in crop: 270 acres was in wheat, which would average a little over 20 bushels per acre; 759 acres in barley, which will return about 25 bushels per acre—this crop was light, but mostly a good bright sample which will find its way to the malt-houses north and south; 790 acres was in oats, grown chiefly for chaff; and 1,671 acres in roots—rape, mangolds, turnips, and potatoes; a few onions were grown, and also carrots for home consumption. One settler showed me his returns for wool, it averaged 8½d. per pound in London; the rest will be quite as good in quality, and should come near a similar return. The population on the estate is now 253 souls, occupying sixty-four dwellings. The opening of the railway has given quite a bustling appearance to the township, as the trains have been taxed to their utmost carrying away stock, grain, chaff, and flax. The local sheep sales are well attended, and really good prices—equal to those obtained in larger centres—are given by buyers, who come from considerable distances to attend. The flocks have very much improved in quality and value. During the earlier days the settlers, for financial reasons, stocked up with old sheep, and now the breeding-stock will compare favourably with any of the much older sheep districts, both in the class of wool produced and the quality of mutton, which one of the largest buyers informed me was excellent. The present position of the settlement may be gauged by the fact that in every transaction involving a transfer a respectable sum of money by way of premium is paid by the incoming lessee.

*Waipapa Settlement.*—Opened for selection in 1901. Purchased to secure homestead-sites and low country to work the extensive areas of high land belonging to the Crown at the back; and now divided into five small grazing-runs, all of which are occupied. Two were taken up in 1901, one in 1902, and the remaining two this year. No new dwellings have been built, tenants renovating and making use of the old buildings erected by previous owners. Improvements to the value of £854 were required to comply with conditions on three of the runs; the value of the work effected is estimated at £1,687. One was a defaulter for a very small amount, who will comply in a month or two. Eighteen souls are residing. On the river flats very fine crops of turnips and oats were grown on land which two years ago grew nothing but rushes. Approximately 7,000 sheep are grazing on this estate, and a few cattle and horses. I regret to say that the rabbits were numerous.

*Pukipuhi Settlement.*—Open for selection in 1897; consists of 320 acres in two separate sections. Secured to complete two larger holdings of ordinary Crown lands. Improvements to the value of £210 have been effected thereon, and the occupiers in each case are in a fair way to make a success of their holdings.

*North Bank Settlement.*—This estate was only opened for selection on the 1st March, 1903. It comprises 12,813 acres, divided into four holdings under lease in perpetuity, two small grazing-