

hold ings. The greater number of these are residing on the land, but in a few instances some selectors are non-resident owing to the isolated position of their sections. This latter disability will be removed as soon as the roads are made within a reasonable distance of such lands.

*Thames County.*—In this county the majority of settlers are making good progress and improvements, and, considering that the greater portion of land available for selection has been broken, hilly country, settlers have done exceedingly well, and, generally speaking, are contented and prosperous. The dairying industry plays an important part in the success of this county, and the Thames Valley Dairy Association hold the proud position of having obtained the highest marks against all comers in the various exhibitions. Stock-raising is also carried on largely, and a marked increase is noticeable, especially in cattle. Being a mining district, settlement is greatly curtailed through most of the unoccupied land being bush-clad, and therefore withheld from Hauraki Pastoral Lease Regulations, a tenure that is becoming more popular every year. Large contracts have been let for the removal of kauri timber, and when these are completed settlers will be able to obtain land under the renewable-lease tenure, there being a lot of fern land on the timber leases. The mining industry also plays an important part in the progress of this county, a large number of men being employed in the mines. A large amount of employment is also obtained through gum-digging operations, and this class of workman is always fairly successful, notwithstanding that gum is getting scarce. New schools have been erected in the outskirts where fresh settlement has taken place, and where required new roads are being energetically pushed on by the local bodies, and will be the means of inducing settlers to take up land in the vicinity. The large tract of rich swamp land owned by the Crown on the Piako River is now being drained in a comprehensive manner, and in a few years will provide large areas of land for settlement, and at no distant date for flax-culture. Owing to the low prices ruling for fibre, the flax industry at the present time is very quiet; but, through judicious management, up-to-date plant, and satisfactory contracts, several mills are still carrying on operations. Generally speaking, this district is very prosperous, good roads, railways, and water-carriage all contributing largely to the welfare of the district.

*Coromandel County.*—Settlement is steadily increasing, and generally the settlers are making fair improvements, and are thrifty and prospering. The greater portion of the land in this county being very broken, settlers confine most of their operations to stock-raising; but in some instances settlers have gone in for separators, and produce a good article, which is readily disposed of at good prices in the district. The erection of saleyards in the district has been a great boon to the settlers, and a great number of applications, comprising thousands of acres of land, have been made under pastoral-lease regulations. Several large timber contracts are at present in full swing, thus providing employment for all classes competent to do the work, and being also the means of enabling settlers to dispose of their products locally and at remunerative rates. The kauri-gum industry also provides employment for a large number of men. New schools have been erected in several parts of the district where required, and new roads are gradually being made. Stock has greatly increased in numbers. No fires of any consequence occurred in this district.

*Waikato County.*—From inspections made, settlers were making good improvements, and all had splendid burns owing to a very dry season. Stock were looking exceptionally well, and still increasing in numbers, especially cattle. Dairying and stock-raising are the principal occupations of the settlers, who are all prosperous and contented. There are many inquiries for land in this county. New roads are being pushed ahead wherever required.

*Manukau County.*—An inspection of all Crown sections was made in this county, and it was found that with few exceptions good improvements were being made, and that settlers generally were contented and prosperous. Stock-raising and dairying are the principal uses this class of land is put to, with good results. Bush-fires temporarily harassed settlers through loss of feed, but most of them look upon the fires as a gain rather than a loss, owing to the amount of weeds destroyed and general clearing-up of old burns, thus practically making new pasture. New roads are being made where necessary, and schools erected where required.

*Tauranga County.*—As in all parts of the east coast, land here is in great demand, the dairying industry having proved such a great success. The late dry summer has also been a good advertisement for this district, it having withstood the drought better than the greater portion of the North Island. The cutting-up of the forest lands in the Otanewainuku and Rotorua Survey Districts in the vicinity of the Tauranga, Oropi, and Rotorua Coach-road has not been a success, owing to the sections being cut up into too small areas. Like all bush lands, the settler must have capital, and the area must be sufficiently large. There have been a lot of inquiries for Crown lands in Te Papa and Apata Parishes. These lands have been withdrawn from sale for resurveying and roading, and when opened will find ready sale. The whole of the county is moving ahead, the butter-factories having done very well for the season, and the drought and fires having done little damage.

*Opotiki County.*—Settlement in this county is progressing apace. All the bush country lying between the Opotiki settled lands and the Motu on the Gisborne side is being eagerly sought after, and rapidly taken up when thrown open for selection in large areas varying from 500 to 1,000 acres. The reason of this is that the country is steep and broken generally, and is naturally a grazing district. A very good class of settler has already taken up a large area of these forest lands, and in spite of the rough country they have felled some thousands of acres, some areas of which are already stocked with some ten thousand sheep. The long spell of dry weather this season has been just what the settlers needed: they have all had good burns, and about 4,700 acres is now being sown in grass. This county has a great future as a first-class agricultural and pastoral district.

*Whakatane County.*—Flax being at a good price during the last two years, flax-mills have sprung up round the edges of the big Whakatane and Matamata Swamps, and a great output of fibre has been the result; but, owing to a big drop in price, the five mills were shut down. Then came the long spell of dry weather, and with it fires which destroyed most of the standing flax. As regards draining opera-