

wool and stock being very beneficial to the settlers. The severe drought of the last few months has been felt, and some of the lessees have lost considerable areas of pasture by fire, but the fires have done a lot of good in the way of clearing up the ground, and much good will accrue in future years from what at present is felt as a misfortune. The tenants are improving their holdings very highly, the excess of improvements effected over requirements being about £50,000. Those tenants who have selected land under the bush and swamp clauses of the Land Act feel the benefits conferred and fully appreciate them, as, by the time the concession has expired and rent becomes due, road-access is greatly improved and their holdings are becoming reproductive.

In the Rangitatau Block, opened in March, 1910, good progress has been made, and fairly large areas of bush have been felled. The grass-seed sown by the Department last season has come on very well indeed, but the settlers have been unable to avail themselves fully of it owing to want of completed access. The settlers are a good class, and most of them have taken up their residence with their families.

In the Riariaki and Mangatiti Blocks, opened in March, 1910, many settlers have already felled bush, as much as 400 acres on one holding having been felled. Generally, however, large areas have not been felled, owing to want of access.

In the Ruatiti Block, opened in February, 1909, good progress has also been made. A stock-bridge has been erected over the Manganui-a-te-Ao River, which is proving a boon to all settlers north of the river in the North Waimarino Block, and a general-traffic bridge is in course of erection. The tenants are doing well, and, as the roads leading to the railway-line are being linked up, they are beginning to look at things more cheerfully. It seems apparent that in a few years, when the second fires have been over this block, the grass will come on well and will carry stock up to expectations.

In the land-for-settlements estates the settlers are doing well, and the settlements are now so well established that their success is beyond any doubt.

The settlers in the village settlements recently established along the Main Trunk Railway line are making good progress, and prosperous towns are springing up where a few years ago there was nothing but standing bush. Several sawmills have been established near these settlements, and many of the settlers find employment at them.

Very little damage by fires was done this year to scenic reserves in this district.

The Crown Lands Ranger for the central district, from Palmerston North northwards, reports that the whole of the district has experienced a severe drought extending over a period of about four months, which has caused a shortage of feed on light lands, but has not affected the heavy land, except that water has been scarce. The settlers are all in good heart, the bulk of them being in fairly good circumstances. Good prices have obtained for wool and fat stock for export, and prices for store stock have been well maintained for good lines—cattle especially having brought very high prices. As was to be expected, bush and grass fires have caused some temporary loss during the dry spell, but the opinion generally is that they have done more good than harm. The roads throughout the district are generally in first-class order, and on bush bridle-tracks a great improvement is noticeable, travelling being nothing like so difficult a matter as it was two years ago. Some loss has been occasioned by fire to some of the reserves in the district. The forest reserve at Rewa suffered severely, and some of the reserves round Taihape were damaged to a lesser degree, but, taking into consideration the long dry spell, it is fortunate that the loss was not much greater.

The Crown Lands Ranger for the south-eastern and southern portions of the district reports that all the land in his district, with the exception of a few shelter-areas, has been brought into effective use, it having been all felled and grassed. The land is generally used for grazing, although, where suitable, dairying is carried on successfully, this being, of course, the most remunerative pursuit on limited holdings, especially on village-settlement and land-for-settlements lands. All settlements held under these tenures are now well established, and are progressing favourably. The tenants on the older estates are doing especially well, and those on the more recently selected areas appear to be on a fair way to success. The residential areas round Wellington are being utilized, but farm areas in the Normandale Settlement are not sought after. Roads throughout are in good order as a whole, and settlers can reach railway and business centres with every convenience. The season, though somewhat dry, has been a most favourable one. The dairy factories have had a large output, stock has fattened off well, grain was harvested in good condition, and prices realized for produce in general have been good. Taking it all through, the tenants have had a successful and encouraging year. No damage by fire has been done to forests or scenic reserves as far as this portion of the land district is concerned.

“THIRDS,” “FOURTHS,” AND “HALVES.”

The allocation under the Land Act, 1908, of the proportion of the rent from Crown lands under various systems of tenure has been made, and the sum of £8,126 7s. 10d. has been paid to the local authorities for expenditure on approved proposals for roadwork and under hypothecation certificates. This amount shows an increase of nearly £3,000 over last year's payments.

On 31st March, 1911, the sum of £11,099 3s. 10d. was in the Receiver's Deposit Account at the credit of the various local bodies in the Wellington Land District.

In a good many cases settlers have in view the hypothecation of “thirds” as security for loans, so as to enable them to undertake work in a more comprehensive manner. They are becoming alive to the fact that small sums received periodically as “thirds” really very often cannot be spent to advantage, and this more particularly applies to such questions as metalling or the widening of bridle-tracks into dray-roads: this in many instances could be effected by hypothecation.