

CONDITIONS AND PROGRESS OF SETTLEMENT.

In the recently-settled districts, most of which are situated between the Main Trunk Railway and that portion of the Wanganui River above Pipiriki, the Ranger reports that considerable improvements have been made, and with the prospect of bridle-tracks being gradually converted into dray-roads, the success of the settlers is well assured. The pastures are improving, and with heavier stocking will not doubt continue to improve.

Little progress has, however, been made in the Waipapa Block, which was opened for selection about twelve months ago. This is chiefly owing to want of good road-access and the lack of a bridge over the Mangatiti Stream.

The newly formed dray-roads in the Ahuahu and Te Tuhi Blocks were much damaged by exceptionally heavy rains in the latter part of last year; large slips and washouts completely blocked the road, and at present everything has to be packed on horseback. A Government subsidy to the county expenditure has, however, been granted, and the settlers have applied to have their holdings declared a special-road district under the provisions of Part II of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1913, and they are therefore very hopeful of the reopening of the road before the next wool season, and of its proper maintenance thereafter until the disturbed ground has consolidated sufficiently to enable the road to be maintained by the ordinary rates.

Regarding the settlements situated in the more accessible localities, the settlers continue to fell and grass considerable areas of bush, and a limited area is also stumped and cleared, notwithstanding that the improvements are largely in excess of the legal requirements.

On the new clearings the grass-seed has taken well, and the turnip-crops have been successful. Where the dairy industry is engaged in new cheese and butter factories are established every season. Shearing was much protracted by wet weather, and the industrial strike for a time adversely affected the export of all farm-produce, but, on the other hand, the wool-clip and lambing were both good, and high prices were maintained, so that, on the whole, the season has been a prosperous one, and settlement may be said to be in a very satisfactory state. Much progress was made by the settlers on the new dairy farms at Mangatainoka. They only acquired them towards the end of last July, and already many houses have been built, the holdings fenced, and a new cheese-factory built and in operation. This was no doubt owing to the fact that the land was cleared and in grass and capable of bringing in returns without much initial expense at the time it was taken up.

TRANSFERS.

During the year completed transfers of ordinary Crown lands numbered 217, with an area of 48,596 acres. On settlement lands thirty-one transfers were registered, comprising an area of 5,117 acres; while thirty-eight education reserves, totalling 9,424 acres in area, were similarly dealt with. These figures in almost every instance show a considerable increase over those submitted last year. Detailed particulars of the transactions are as follows:—

Ordinary Crown lands—	No.	Area. Acres.
Occupation with right of purchase	53	19,626
Lease in perpetuity	105	14,984
Small grazing-runs	5	10,210
Miscellaneous	11	750
Renewable lease	40	3,000
Perpetual lease	3	26
	217	48,596
Land for settlements—		
Lease in perpetuity	23	3,032
Small grazing-runs	1	1,880
Renewable lease	7	205
	31	5,117
Education reserves	38	9,424

FORFEITURES AND SURRENDERS.

The number of forfeitures during the year under review were in all thirty-three, covering a total area of 2,414 acres, and an annual rental of £355. Included in this area is one education reserve, the area of which is 17 acres, and the annual rental £23.

The surrenders numbered four, with an area of 26 acres, and an annual rental of £14.

CONVERSION OF TENURE.

Two conversions to other tenures were recorded during the year. As was the case last year, one was converted from village homestead special settlement to renewable lease. The other, formerly held under perpetual lease, was also exchanged for renewable lease. The total area of these holdings was 258 acres. This passes automatically into the national endowment.

Conversion to Freehold of Settlement Lands under Part IV of the Land Laws Amendment Act, 1913.

Under the Act of last session four holders of land-for-settlement lease-in-perpetuity sections purchased the freehold for cash. The area was 340 acres, and the total price paid £4,778. One tenant elected to purchase by deferred payment, the area being $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres.