

MANAGEMENT OF VILLAGE-SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATIONS.

Subject to the Act and to the rules, the affairs of every association are managed by a Board of not less than three trustees (one of whom shall be chairman), to be elected by the villagers in manner prescribed by the rules. The money owing for advances by any association is the first charge on the assets of such association in priority to all other creditors. The villagers are jointly and severally liable for the due repayment of all moneys advanced by the Government for the purposes of the association, and for the due observance and performance on the part of the lessees of all the covenants and conditions of the lease.

RULES FOR VILLAGE-SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATIONS.

The rules of every association provide for the management of its affairs for the common benefit of the villagers upon principles of co-operation and equitable division. Such rules are not to be acted upon until after they have been submitted to the Minister of Lands, and his approval in writing has been indorsed thereon; and they are to be laid before Parliament within fourteen days of such approval, if Parliament be then sitting, and, if Parliament is not sitting, then within fourteen days from the first meeting of Parliament; and if any rules are disapproved of within fourteen days after being so laid before Parliament, by a resolution of both Houses of Parliament, the rules so disapproved shall have no force or effect after such disapproval.

WHAT IS BEING DONE.

To the present Government of South Australia belongs the credit of initiating one of the most interesting systems of land settlement I have yet seen. It is an entirely new departure, not only in land legislation, but also in assisting the unemployed, and endeavouring to provide a permanent cure by utilising land with unutilised labour. To lift, as it were, from the streets and by-ways of a city an army of men, women, and children, many of them comparatively quite destitute, place them on land, which by irrigation can be made most productive, assist them to accomplish this by aiding them to obtain the requisite plant and machinery, and further assist them to establish homes for themselves, each villager working for the common benefit of all, upon principles of co-operation and equitable division of labour and profits, is certainly a great and noble work, and this is what is being done by the Government of South Australia, ably assisted by many philanthropic ladies and gentlemen of that colony.

The scheme has, of course, been ridiculed, and there are those ever ready to predict failure when the proposal is to place men on the land, and show them how to make a living from it for themselves and families. It was said the result would be sure to be a failure; but up to the present it has not been so. It is true that a number of the original villagers have left, but the number is comparatively small. It was only natural that a certain weeding-out process should take place soon after the settlements were formed, but I have reason to believe those who are now on the land will remain. These villagers have ventured forth in faith, being firmly of opinion that if they work zealously together they have a great future in the land they occupy. That the soil is marvellously productive when irrigated there can be no doubt. This was fully borne out by Mr. Glyde, for many years a resident in Canterbury, and now Chairman of the Fruit-growers' Association, Mildura, whom I had the pleasure of meeting. He informed me of the case of a settler, resident in the Murray district, and on similar soil to that in the village settlements, who had cleared, after planting four-and-a-half years, from 9½ acres of fruits (chiefly raisins), £24 per acre. Another settler obtained 24 tons of raisins from 13½ acres, after four years' planting. The average price he obtained was 3d. per pound, equal to £28 per ton, or £672 for the crop.

Thirteen settlements are now established under the Act, composed of 470 settlers, who have signed the prescribed memorandum of association. These, with their wives and families, represent a total of 1,935 settled on the land. Eleven of the settlements are on the banks of the river Murray, and shown on the lithograph attached. There is also one at Mount Remarkable, to the north of Adelaide, and one at Nangkita, to the south. The number of settlers on the Murray, including wives and families, is 1,679.

The total area held by the village settlement associations is 67,191 acres. The tenure is perpetual lease, at an average rental of nearly 3d. per acre per annum. Advances made by Government on behalf of the settlements, as provided by the Act, being 50 per cent. of the value of improvements made by the villagers, amount to a total of £15,974 17s. 7d. to the 31st May, 1895, equivalent to an advance of £25 2s. 2d. per settler.

The following return shows the position of the eleven settlements on the Murray River :—

Name of Settlement.	Area.	Original Number of Villagers.	Present Number.			Total Number.	Horses.	Cows.	Sheep.	Pigs.	Poultry.	Working Bullocks.
			Men.	Women.	Children.							
New Era ...	2,095	22	22	22	54	98	9	19	150	26	200	...
Gillen ...	9,990	65	30	30	73	133	4	6	160	12	150	8
Ramco ...	2,240	14	15	3	4	22	4	10	200	...	...	...
Waikerie ...	3,082	36	30	24	80	134	2	2	150	...	...	...
Holder ...	7,540	71	54	43	183	280	23	7	50	32	...	...
Kingston ...	4,800	25	25	21	65	111	13	10	125	27	...	...
Moorook ...	3,200	21	18	17	45	80	4	2	25	...	...	...
New Residence	4,000	20	14	12	49	75	4	2	25	2	...	...
Pypap ...	10,530	90	75	70	255	400	15	37	500	20	200	8
Lyrup ...	14,060	70	85	55	165	305	37	13	600	40	400	...
Murtho ...	2,000	20	13	7	21	41	9	10	100	6	...	...
Totals ...	63,537	454	381	304	994	1,679	124	118	2,085	165	950	16