

settlements have not yet been thoroughly opened up by roads. The present access consists in the main of horse-tracks, only suitable for horse and stock traffic in the summer, and which are almost impracticable in the winter. In the face of these formidable drawbacks, some of the associations have made good progress. Amongst these may be mentioned the Hunterville, Sommerville, Palmerston North Knights of Labour, Stirling, Delaware, Pohangina, and Umutoi Blocks. In reporting on the village settlements the Ranger states that as a whole they continue to make steady progress. Notably is this the case in regard to Horowhenua and Levin, which are splendidly situated, well provided with railway and road access, and other essentials which make for success. Of the more remote settlements, the villagers in the Makohine, Mangaweka, and Rakautoru are gradually improving their holdings. Most of them have the advantage of securing employment on the co-operative railway- and road-works. The Pakihikura and Karewarewa villagers, who are far back from the settled districts, are progressing more slowly. Their holdings are far too small for such a distant locality, and they are compelled to wander about in search of work. In the case of Rewa, where the holdings are also too small, the establishment of a dairy factory will render the holdings more attractive and profitable.

Mr. John McKay, the Acting Crown Lands Ranger in South Wairarapa, reports that in every instance the selectors in his district have complied amply as regards the improvement conditions of the Land Act. He states that the settlers are of a superior class, and deserve great credit for the manner in which they have overcome the difficulties of pioneer settlement.

A full consideration of the Rangers' reports, confirmed by my own inspections and observations, leads to the conclusion that, under ordinarily favourable conditions previously referred to, the settlements in the Wellington District continue to make good progress, and, with the advantages following upon the establishment of dairy factories and creameries, the higher prices lately ruling for stock and wool, they have every prospect of complete success. On the other hand, those settlements which have been started upon distant, inaccessible country, much of it comprising rough forest hills of considerable altitude, subdivided as they are into small holdings, cannot be expected to be highly improved and profitably stocked and occupied until the present disadvantages and drawbacks have been overcome or remedied.

The members of the Land Board have had the advantage during the past year of visiting various portions of the Wellington Land District, and were much impressed with the excellent roads provided in many of the districts. In several instances, however, they found the back-country settlers inadequately served in this respect. It is admitted that well graded and constructed horse-roads suffice in the early days of settlement; but, when the time arrives for the stocking and actual occupation of the holdings by the settlers and their families, it is essential that at least the main road shall be a practicable dray-road.

#### *Lands for Settlement.*

Paparangi, near Johnsonville, acquired in terms of the Land for Settlements Act in July, 1897, is the single acquisition by the Crown in this district. The settlement comprises thirty-nine sections, the area being 310 acres and 8 perches. It was thrown open for selection on the 2nd February, 1898. By the 31st March, 1898, nineteen selections, comprising 212 acres 1 rood 30 perches, had been made; thirteen lots, containing 72 acres 3 roods 31 perches, were taken up last year, making the totals thirty-two holdings and 285 acres 1 rood 21 perches. There were three forfeitures during the year; in one case the selector is a South Island resident and never appeared; two others neglected to comply with preliminary conditions. Excluding two sections reserved for the Stock Department, there remained for disposal on the 31st March last eight lots, of an area of 23 acres 3 roods 15 perches, which are gradually going off.

The Ranger's report of the 13th March last shows satisfactory progress; it runs as follows: Twenty-eight sections, with a total area of 267 acres 2 roods 1 perch, have been inspected; twenty settlers with their families (ninety-two souls in all) are residing, and eight settlers are not residing; five of the latter, however, have not held their sections a year, consequently residence is not due; probably when it is due they will comply. There are twenty-two substantial weatherboard houses, valued at £898. The values of six of these houses are slightly below £30; but they are built in such a manner that it is quite evident that the owners intend to add to them (probably as soon as funds will permit). Twenty-two sections are ring-fenced, and three sections are almost ring-fenced. A few sections are subdivided by fences. The total length of fencing erected by settlers on the estate is about 6 miles 52 chains, valued at £343 19s., but, owing to the want of good posts, &c., a large portion of the fencing is below the average standard. On three sections no improvements have been effected, and I was told that the selectors do not intend to retain their holdings.

At the time of inspection there were forty-two head of cattle, seven horses, and six pigs on the estate. Only about 5 acres have been ploughed, and the soil seems to turn up very well. Most of the settlers have dug up small patches of ground for gardens, but they find it almost useless attempting to grow vegetables, owing to the strong winds experienced here, until shelter-trees have grown up. When this is done I feel sure gardening will be a success, as the soil is good, and will gradually improve by working.

The majority of the settlers are labourers possessing limited means. Some are working in Wellington, some at the Ngahauranga freezing-works, some for settlers in the district, and others again are at present in Canterbury harvesting; some are railway porters, platelayers, cabinet-makers, and there is an engineer and a commercial traveller—all leave their families on the land whilst they follow their different occupations. I may mention I only saw three of the settlers on their sections; all the others were away working; but the wives and families were there. This shows that the settlers are all in employment. I did not hear of any serious complaints; they all spoke cheerfully of the future, and I think they acknowledge and appreciate the benefit of being able to secure a home in a healthy locality and at a moderate rent. My own opinion is that this