

In the smaller settlements near Hastings dairying and fruit-culture are the principal sources of income, but the former industry has suffered to some extent through the prolonged spell of dry weather.

The Raumati Settlement, near Dannevirke, has also suffered damage and loss through recent bush-fires, which have in some cases destroyed buildings and in others burnt considerable areas of grassed country used for dairying purposes, thus diminishing the milk-supply, and rendering it necessary in some instances to dispose by sale or otherwise of a number of dairy stock.

In the Tongioio Settlement experiments are being made for the purpose of destroying the blackberry. The brambles on the scenic reserve and other spots specially chosen for the experiment have been sprayed with various poisonous solutions to test their efficacy, but it will be a few weeks before a definite opinion can be given as to which is the best spray, and whether it is likely to effect the complete destruction of the pest. It is very certain that one cutting a year is of very little use, as those cut on this estate last year have since grown trailers 6 ft. to 7 ft. long, and the cost of cutting even once a year is quite prohibitive. If the experiment is a success it will solve a difficult problem not only on Tongioio, but in many other blackberry-infested districts in the Dominion.

There is nothing of special note in connection with the other settlements, which are all in a very satisfactory condition, and furnish ample proof of the great advantages of closer settlement.

In the northern part of the district, round Poverty Bay, there are eight settlements—viz., Pouparae, Waimarie, Willows, Wigan, Te Arai, Kanakania, Ngatapa, and Clydebank. All the sections on these settlements have been selected, except a small section of 9½ acres in Te Arai Settlement, which has just been forfeited for non-compliance with the residential conditions.

The value of the improvements effected, including the original improvements, is double those required by the Act. There are very few defaulters, and their non-compliance with conditions is not serious. The settlers are all doing well, and the progress made is very satisfactory indeed.

The settlements are all so well established in this part of the district that little can be added to the reports of previous years. This portion of the district, in common with other parts of Hawke's Bay, suffered considerably from the long dry spell extending through the summer and autumn, and was the most prolonged drought experienced for many years.

ROBT. T. SADD,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

TARANAKI.

Tokaora.—Once again I have to report a most prosperous year for this settlement. All the settlers are doing well, and improving their holdings as far as it is possible on highly improved land such as this is. With electric power so close, many of them are installing electric milking-machines, and are having their houses and sheds lit by electric light, while the improvement made to the buildings is most marked.

Clandon.—This settlement appears to improve each year. The majority of the settlers are clearing their land of the dead timber, and are ploughing up every available piece with the idea of regrassing as much as possible. As far as I can ascertain, all these settlers are doing well.

Huinga.—Taking this settlement as a whole, it appears to be in a fairly prosperous condition. Those settlers who have been able to continue milking on their holdings are doing well, but there are one or two who, from one reason or another, have gone in for sheep, and this hardly pays on high-priced small areas such as these farms are. Without doubt the change from cows to sheep is beneficial to the land, but the latter do not pay as well as the former. Some of the settlers are now going in for hedge-planting along their permanent fence-lines, foreseeing the time when fencing timber will be extremely scarce in the neighbourhood.

Spotswood.—The improvement in this settlement during the year is most marked. A number of new houses have been erected on the sections taken up, and others are in course of construction. All the section-holders are apparently satisfied with their holdings, though some of them would like to increase their size, as they see the time approaching when a rise in values is almost certain. There are still some sections in the settlement undisposed of, and it may be desirable to offer them under Part IV of the Act of 1912 in fee-simple.

G. H. BULLARD,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

WELLINGTON.

In the west coast portion of the Wellington District the settlements are for the most part situated in the vicinities of Feilding, Bull's, and Lower Oroua, and the tenants on them engage principally in dairying, cropping, and fruit-growing. The settlements in this locality are now so well established and developed, and their success is so undoubted, that little can be added to reports of previous years.

The majority of the land-for-settlements estates are found in the east coast division of the district, and on these the settlers are engaged in mixed farming; the higher areas being utilized for grazing and the lower for dairying and agricultural purposes.