

Omaka Estate.—Opened for selection in 1896. Occupied by thirteen selectors, ten of whom reside, and three on freehold land adjoining. The improvements done on this estate at time of visit are valued at £4,258, being £3,669 above requirements of the law. There are twelve dwelling-houses occupied by fifty souls. The stock consists of 3,500 sheep, 36 horses, and 30 head of cattle. Wheat was grown on 115 acres, giving an average return of 18 bushels per acre. Oats on 208 acres, mostly grown for chaff. The sheaves would average $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons per acre; and if threshed out, about 30 bushels of grain per acre. The barley-crop occupied 79 acres, resulting in an average of 15 bushels—a poor return compared with previous years. Rye was grown in small quantity; it seemed to thrive well on this soil. Of roots, potatoes only sufficient for settlers' own use. Turnips and rape were grown on 237 acres. Onions and peas do well on low flats near water. One or two settlers slightly overstepped the cropping conditions. These crops helped the settlers to tide over a time when the market for wool and mutton was depressed. A few grape-vines growing well indicated that vine-culture could be profitably undertaken. Settlers find a ready market for all their poultry, eggs, bacon, &c., being in close proximity to the provincial capital. No complaints were heard, save the general complaint of want of rain.

Richmond Brook Estate.—Opened for selection in 1899. The improvements which have been done on this estate by eleven selectors was at the time of last inspection valued at £3,402, an excess over the amount required of £2,104. The improvements consist of eight substantial houses, two huts, woolshed, sheep-yards, twenty-eight miles of fencing, 335 acres laid down in exotic grasses, &c. The settlers' stock consist of 6,000 sheep, 26 head of cattle, and 40 horses. Not much cropping is done; 87 acres was in oats for chaff, 40 in wheat, and 143 in barley, with only moderate results. Last lambing was very good in this district; one settler was fortunate in getting 120 per cent.; the average would be about 95 per cent. The settlers appeared to be contented, no complaints being heard. The total population on the estate is twenty-nine. The school has an attendance of eighteen. There is only one defaulter for non-residence.

Puhipuhi Estate.—Opened for selection in 1897. The two small sections which were purchased to complete two holdings of ordinary Crown lands only comprise 320 acres, on which improvements to the value of £210 have been done by the selectors.

Waipapa Estate.—Opened for selection in 1901. Four of the seven small grazing-runs into which this estate is divided were let in March last year, and the remaining three in February of this year. On two of the runs no improvements of a permanent character (excepting scattering grass-seed) have been effected. On Nos. 110 and 111 fencing and clearing to the value of £200 has been done; about 100 acres were broken up and cropped (oats and turnips). The two selectors of Runs Nos. 108 and 109 were unfortunate in purchasing their sheep just on the top of the market, a sharp fall taking place immediately after. Rabbits I found in considerable numbers. Approximately, 6,000 sheep were run on the estate.

Starborough Estate.—Opened for selection in 1899. Occupied by fifty-nine selectors, with holdings varying from 25 to 3,373 acres. The present population, including the Town of Seddon, is 234 souls. Also, including the Town of Seddon, the improvements effected now amount to £22,191; and no defaulters in respect to improvement conditions, and seven only who are partial defaulters as to residence—these will nearly all comply during the present year. The crops suffered severely through an unusually dry season, and only a few of the settlers who had taken the precaution to sow very early had satisfactory results; in some instances the sheep were turned in on the crops. The rainfall during the year was only 20 in. Sixty-nine acres was in wheat, mostly Tuscan, 742 acres in barley, and 437 in oats; the wheat would average about 15 bushels, the barley only 10, and the oats about a ton of sheaves to the acre. Rape and turnips were grown on 1,256 acres; about half the crop was profitable; the December showers saved the crop from being a total failure. In some instances, although the growth came away, it was too late to have the lambs fit for summer market; in consequence a number of lambs were sold as stores. Mangolds and potatoes were grown on 87 acres; the former root-crop does well on Starborough land; both it and sugar-beet will receive more attention in the future. Cape barley is grown for winter feed, and comes in admirably for the lambing-time. The increase in the value of improvements during the year—viz., £6,000—chiefly consists in the replacing of the huts on some of the sections by commodious dwellings, laying down exotic grasses (660 acres during the year), interior fences, dams, gardens, and plantations of gums, acacia, and pines, sheep-yards, &c. As regards the roads, one can drive a carriage to every section on the estate. The facilities afforded by the Public Works Department to convey produce and goods to and from the estate has been of value to the settlers, and has been taken full advantage of. Approximately, 20,000 sheep and lambs were sold off the settlement during the summer months. Local sales at the Seddon yards took place at intervals, and were well attended. The Seddon School has a roll-number of twenty-four; attendance good. Very nearly all trades are represented at Seddon, where there are two stores, bakehouse, butchery, shoemaker, carpenter, three blacksmiths, saddler, and gardener; an hotel with ample room to accommodate all travellers; doctors and dentists attend once a week from Blenheim; and, with the advent of the railroad, settlers are now fairly well attended for their wants. Rain has been plentiful recently, and all fear of shortness of feed during the winter has been dispelled. The stock look healthy. I do not know of any healthier country for growing sheep in New Zealand than Starborough.

North Bank Estate.—The grazing of this estate is temporarily let to Messrs. Bell Bros.

C. W. ADAMS,
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