

is given to better breeds of stock; large areas of bush have been felled; there is more cultivation; the homesteads have been improved; population has increased; dairying is extending; there is plenty of employment in connection with sawmills and flax-mills, all of which has conduced to substantial progress and improved conditions, and has created confidence in the future.

Canterbury.

The Canterbury reports and statistics will be found to afford conclusive evidence of the satisfactory progress settlement has made in that district. The conditions and requirements of the leases have been well attended to by the tenants; the improvements in buildings and more comfortable homesteads testify to the better position of the owners. A severe winter and exceptionally heavy snowfalls in the inland districts of south and mid Canterbury, which caused much suffering and loss of sheep, was compensated for somewhat by a favourable spring and summer, which produced plentiful pastures and good yields of grain and root crops. With the exception noted, pastoralists and agriculturalists had a profitable year. There can be no question as to the solid progress made in settlement, the assured position of the farmers and graziers, and the future prospects of the settlers.

Otago.

In Otago also the tenants' improvements greatly exceed those prescribed in their leases. Settlers as a whole had a successful and satisfactory year's work; but the inland country was visited by an exceptionally heavy fall of snow last July, followed by intense cold for a prolonged period, which caused heavy losses in sheep to large property-owners, runholders, and small farmers. These disastrous conditions were followed by a dry spring, a spell of cold weather in November, subsequently by heavy rainfall, which destroyed many lambs and delayed and damaged the harvest in some localities. Taking Otago as a whole, grass was abundant, crops generally were plentiful and excellent in quality, and the settlers benefited by the good prices for the stock and wool. Dairying operations were also successful, and their wider extension should insure improved conditions and the comfort of the settlers. The Crown tenants throughout the Otago Land District have the benefit of being associated with a numerous and wealthy community of farmers and pastoralists, and are thus provided with convenient and profitable markets for labour and produce. It is almost needless to say that in this extensive and important district of the colony, well served by railways and roads, and possessing great natural advantages, the progress of settlement has been satisfactory, and that the future outlook is most cheering.

Southland.

The Southland settlements are reported to be prosperous; they made good progress last year, and their prospects are very good. A favourable season, plenty of employment for the settlers on small holdings, and the excellent prices for products conduced to these ends. As the holdings in the district are improved year by year by more effective draining, liming, and working, it is safe to predict that few parts of the colony will carry more population proportionate to area; and when the settlers have brought their holdings into a perfect state of cultivation and increased the output of their lands, we may reasonably anticipate that they will find themselves in an established and prosperous condition. The report of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, in common with several of the others, is replete with information and statistics of a most interesting and gratifying character.

General.

The general tenor of the foregoing reports demonstrates that the requirements as to improvements have in the main been amply complied with; indeed, a large excess in value is the general characteristic. The failures in this respect, and also as to residence, are usually accounted for by difficulty of access, want of roads, and the necessity the settlers are under in many instances to leave their holdings in search of employment. The tenants have, with some specified exceptions, added largely to their improvements, especially as regards buildings, the reclamation of forest and swamp lands, and the cultivation of their holdings. In some districts they joined with the Government in completing or improving the road access. Remarkable advancement in this respect is to be found, especially in the Wellington Land District, where the "thirds" and "fourths" have been applied to provide interest and sinking funds on the capital cost of converting bridle-tracks into dray-roads, and metalling the same. All suitable country, particularly in the North Island, opened up in this manner has become the scene of dairying operations. This has resulted in greatly enhanced land-values, and has placed the settlers in a position of comfort and independence. Facility of communication has led to the erection of stores, schools, churches, and other meeting-places, and also to the opening of post and telegraph offices. These essentials, combined with the