

Generally speaking, the settlers are prosperous, and the flax and butter outputs have considerably increased. Swamps are being drained and planted with flax in several localities. There is keen competition among mill-owners for the green flax, and it is readily bought even when extremely difficult of access. The timber industry has also been active, and there is a good demand for labour in the timber, flax, and gum industries.

The Ranger whose district extends over an area both north and south of Auckland City reports as follows on the portions which he has visited :—

Waitemata, Rodney, Otamatea, Waipa, and Manukau Counties.—Most of the settlers have effected good improvements and are doing well. A considerable area of bush has been felled, and fair burns have been obtained. Several flax-mills are working in the Waitemata County. Stock-raising, however, is the principal occupation of the settlers.

Thames County (part).—The land available for settlement being mostly broken country, settlers confine their operations principally to stock-raising, which has greatly increased, and they are diligently felling and burning bush, with good results. Being chiefly a mining district, settlement is somewhat curtailed on bush lands through most of the areas being withdrawn from Hauraki Pastoral Lease Regulations, a form of tenure exceedingly popular with settlers; but, as a number of timber leases are now nearly devoid of milling-timbers, the areas will soon become available for settlement. The mining, kauri-timber, and gum industries continue to provide employment for a large number of persons. New schools have been erected, and roadwork is being pushed on by the local body. A considerable area of rich swamp country will be available as soon as a successful drainage scheme has been devised.

Coromandel County, Ohinemuri and Piako Counties (parts).—The report on Thames County applies equally to the Coromandel County. Stock-raising is the principal occupation, and there are several flax-mills also at work. In the Waitoa district, although more recently selected, good improvements have been made, and the selectors are fairly prosperous. The land available for settlement is easily brought under cultivation, as it is mostly flat and covered with fern or tea-tree.

Waikato County.—Most of the selections in the county were inspected, and I found the improvements well advanced. Bushfelling had been effected extensively, and good burns had taken place. Dairying and stock-raising are the principal occupations of the settlers, who appear to be doing exceedingly well.

Raglan County.—The report on Waikato County applies similarly to the selections in this county. There are signs of prosperity everywhere.

South of Auckland.

The Rangers have supplied the following reports :—

Waitomo County.—There is every indication that the selectors who have gone into these back-blocks are satisfied with their sections. There has been an increase in the number of cattle and sheep. Bushfelling is being carried on energetically. Schools and dairy factories are being erected, and there is every sign of a progressive district. A large area of Native land has been taken up by private individuals.

Awakino County.—There has also been excellent progress in this district. The settlers are devoting their attention to stock-raising, and settlement is progressing satisfactorily.

Kawhia County.—A marked increase in the number of cattle and sheep, the area brought under crop, the extensive bushfelling, and the general evidence of energetic settlement indicate that this will be a very prosperous district. The Northern Steamship Company has a small steamer trading from Kawhia up the Marakopa River, and it has proved a great boon to the settlers in the contiguous districts.

West Taupo and Waipa Counties.—Dairying, stock-raising, and cropping are receiving attention from the settlers in the Puniu Survey District, but I am not in a position to say much about the general progress of settlement in these counties, as I have not been able to go over any considerable portion of the locality.

Opotiki County.—Selectors, on the whole, are making good progress, and have established comfortable homes, especially those who have obtained large areas. A few small areas taken up by people with small means have made poor headway, which shows that the Opotiki forest lands are not suitable for small farms or for people with little means to carry out the improvements. The whole district was visited by heavy floods in January, which caused considerable damage to roads and crops.

Whakatane County.—The swamp lands in the Rangitaiki and Matata districts are receiving great attention in the matter of flax-cultivation. Some of the sections have changed hands at high prices. A considerable sum of money is being spent in taking levels and putting in drains, but until the floodwaters from the Rangitaiki River are prevented from running into the swamp no satisfactory results will be obtained. For the present it is impossible for the selectors as a whole to reside. The high land in the county is first-class dairying country, and the selectors are doing well.

Tauranga County.—A number of new settlers have taken up land in this district, and people are just beginning to find out that it is first-class dairying country. With good practical farming, the so-called Bay of Plenty cattle-disease is a myth.

Rotorua County.—When this district becomes cleared and grassed there is nothing to prevent it from becoming a large dairying centre. All that is required is strict attention to grass-seed; all soft grasses should be avoided. The timber industry is in full swing. In addition to the four large saw-mills at Mamaku, another has been erected at Arahiwi, and a mill has been moved into the forest lately purchased by the Government from the Thames Valley Land Company. There has also been a large mill erected in the Horohoro district, and seven miles of tram-line have been formed from the Ngatira Railway-station to the mill. There is a demand for labour in the district.