

APPENDIX No. 5.

REPORTS ON THE SETTLEMENTS AT MARTIN'S BAY AND JACKSON'S BAY, West Coast, Middle Island.

MARTIN'S BAY.

SIR,—

Wellington, 30th January, 1884.

In accordance with your instructions I visited Martin's Bay on the 21st and 22nd instant. The "Stella's" boat landed her cargo and passengers about a mile up the River Hollyford. Several of the settlers were on the beach waiting the arrival of the mail and their goods, the steamer having fired a gun and blown her whistle to apprise them of her arrival.

After some conversation with the people I engaged a boat, and went up the river and across Lake McKerrow as far as Jamestown, and, on landing there, traversed the bush to the foot of the hills and up to the Hokuri Stream.

The Hollyford is a river broader than the Clutha at Balclutha, but neither so rapid nor so deep throughout, although in many places it is much deeper; its current is more like that of the Avon in Christchurch, but it is certainly six times its width, and very much deeper. The banks are low, and the flat is mostly on the right bank or northern side. The tide flows up to Lake McKerrow; and the Hollyford, Lake McKerrow, Pyke's Creek, and Awarua in Big Bay were no doubt at one time connected, as Dusky Sound and Breaksea now are.

I was informed by Mr. Craig and others who had explored the country that the rise from Big Bay to Lake Alabaster did not appear to exceed 15 feet, and that thence down Pyke's River the fall to Lake McKerrow is very little. Gold has been found in this country, but its difficulty of access renders working unpayable.

The settlers at Martin's Bay are,—

Mrs. Robertson, a widow, with two sons and two daughters. She has 100 acres in occupation, of which twelve are cleared and in grass. About thirty cattle graze on this and in the bush. The elder son has a mining claim in an adjoining creek, and could, he says, make £2 to £3 a week if he worked continuously. Mrs. Robertson also collects birdskins for disposal in Dunedin.

Mr. Craig and his wife occupy a house and have a very fair garden, but he does not own any land yet. He has also a creek claim on the northern side of the flat, but has only recently begun to work it.

Mr. Webb's holding comes next, going up the river. His household consists of six persons, and he occupies fifty acres, of which twelve acres are cleared and under grass, with about half an acre of garden. He has thirty-two cattle, and has a claim from which he earns about £1 a week, working half his time in it.

Mr. John George is the next settler, with fifty acres, of which he has cleared twenty acres, and has patches of wheat, oats, potatoes, grass for seed, and a small garden. They look very well, but he says that the sparrows will probably eat up all his wheat before it is ripe.

Mr. D. Mackenzie is the other settler. He is located on the beach, and holds about 100 acres, of which he has cleared five acres, and planted potatoes and sown some grass. He has twelve cows milking, and exports the butter by the "Stella."

With the exception of Mr. Webb, all the people expressed themselves as able to make a living, and seemed to think they were as well off in Martin's Bay as they would be in some other part of New Zealand.

The river settlers have a grievance—that the "Stella" does not land their goods, as they say might oftener be done, in the river, instead of at the boat-landing on the south side of the bay.

The river entrance is a difficult one, except with a flowing tide and near high water, unless in calm weather. With a southerly wind it is unsafe. The boat-landing is best in a southerly breeze, the river in a northerly wind.

As the master of the "Stella" is the best judge which place is the safest to land his cargo at, and as he is moreover in a measure responsible for the lives of his men and the care of his boats, there is no reason to doubt but he will select the most fitting landing-place in all circumstances. He could, of course, wait at Milford Sound for a wind and tide favourable for the river, but, as the steamer's working expenses are £20 a day, this is scarcely to be thought of.

As the majority of the settlers would be pleased to have their goods landed in the river, this no doubt will be done when practicable, but in any case the greatest distance they would have to be carried on land is not over a mile; and, if the river settlers would build a futtuh at the boat-landing, their goods would not be injured at all by exposure. They, however, prefer to take round a tent-fly when it is wanted, rather than "encourage the landing of their stuff on the beach."

The want of a passable track up the east side of Lake McKerrow was brought under notice. The route is just practicable by foot, but quite impassable for cattle or horses. The only horse in the settlement had to swim round the bluffs after a boat. From the upper end of the lake the Greenstone track to Lake Wakatipu is fairly fit for driving stock, or could easily be made so, and, if the track along Lake McKerrow were formed, cattle could be driven to and from the Lake District, and further settlement made more practicable. The cost, they say, would be about £500; and I believe, if a good long time were given, the settlers themselves would do the work at a low rate.

The want of more frequent postal communication is also much felt. The "Stella" comes every three months, but rarely gives time for replies to letters received by her. Occasionally Queenstown is visited by some of the settlers, but, as the journey to and from takes nine days, it is not often done. Could a mail be arranged midway between the trips of the steamer, the isolation of the place, and this objection to further settlement, would be much remedied. There is in the bay about 4,000 acres of level land yet unoccupied and fit for settlement, and I believe, with better means of communication, much of it would be taken up and occupied. The climate is said to be pleasant; there is a fine river, with good land on its banks; gold is found in the neighbourhood, north and south; cattle thrive in the bush; birds and fish are plentiful. To men with growing families there