

APPENDIX No. 5.—IMPROVED-FARM SETTLEMENTS.

AUCKLAND.

THE total number of settlements under the improved-farm settlement conditions is seven in this land district, of which number four are under my own supervision, and upon which I follow with special reports. Of the other three, two—Te Rau-a-moa and Paemako—are under the supervision, for convenience, of Mr. Hursthouse, who will doubtless report to you direct, and the last (Tawai), at Awakino, is being administered by the Chief Surveyor, New Plymouth, as being almost within the boundaries of his district.

The most northerly of these settlements, named Rangitira, is situated on the main Opanake (Kaihu)—Hokianga Road, and is only occupied as yet by four settlers, doubtless from want of road-access, which has only just been completed to its boundaries. The land, though of a high altitude, is of generally better quality than that of the two adjoining settlements. The resident settlers have felled 34 acres of bush and grassed 4 acres. They hold 100 acres each. The total advances made to them for houses, bushfelling, &c., amount to £93 4s. 9d., whilst the total value of their improvements amount to £126 13s.

Awatuna, the next settlement to the south, and on the same road, is not progressing very satisfactorily, the land being not only of a high altitude, but also rather wet, owing to the number of springs. Out of ten original selectors only four are now resident, and these are making considerable improvements. The total area of bush felled is 214 acres, and 201 acres has been grassed. The total amount of advances made to this settlement from the commencement is £630 17s. 8d., whilst the present value of the improvements does not come up to that amount.

Still going south, the next on the main road is Mangatu. There were ten original selectors, and there are now ten settlers resident on their sections, and making fair progress. The land is fairly good, and the settlers have had plenty of work felling kauri, on a royalty. The area of bush felled is 266 acres, and 238 acres has been grassed. The total amount advanced to this settlement is £829 1s. 7d., whilst the present value of their improvements amounts to £1,334 8s. I feel sure that the settlers in this case may be considered permanent.

Off the main road, and situated in a westerly direction, towards the Manganui Bluff, and not far from the sea, is the Katui Settlement, on a northerly slope, with good volcanic land. This is certainly one of the most successful settlements, chiefly because the land is good and the situation warmer, from being lower in height and nearer the sea. The settlers have all made good progress, and done plenty of fencing and building. The original settlers were ten in number; of these, nine are now resident. They have felled 223 acres of bush, and grassed 212 acres. The total amount advanced is £594 18s. 3d., and the present value of their improvements is £990 8s. The men on the three last-mentioned settlements have all, more or less, had employment for some months, felling kauri on Crown land, paying a royalty of 4d. per 100 ft. This has now been increased to 6d. per 100 superficial feet. I am glad to say that the Board of Education are at last erecting two half-time schools at Katui and Awatuna, which will greatly encourage the settlers and their families to remain on their lands.

Of the three settlements before mentioned south of Auckland, the first under Mr. Hursthouse's supervision is Te Rau-a-moa, situated on the slopes of Mount Pirongia, and upon the main Pirongia—Kawhia Road. It has ten resident settlers, all of whom seem quite satisfied with their prospects. The bush felled amounts to 250 acres, and 83 acres has been grassed. The total advances made amount to £479, whilst the improvements are valued at £720 6s.

The second settlement, also under Mr. Hursthouse's supervision, is situated about eighteen miles south-west of Kuiti Railway-station, and is called "Paemako." It is on what will be the main road to Awakino and Mokau. There are here also ten resident settlers, holding 1,178 acres. As the settlement is in its infancy there are no advances to record, and the improvements to date only amount to £50.

The last settlement, Tawai, at Awakino, is entirely under the supervision of the Chief Surveyor at New Plymouth, who will include it in his report.

GERHARD MUELLER, Commissioner of Crown Lands.

NORTH ISLAND CENTRAL.

Te Rauamo Improved-farm Settlement.—This is a bush settlement, situated on the Alexandra—Kawhia Road. It is occupied by ten settlers, who have their families living with them on the land, the average size of the holding being 141 acres. During last season 250 acres of bush was felled by the settlers, but, owing to the very wet weather experienced since January, most of them have been unable to burn their fellings. Unless others have been able to burn during the last few days, only three have done so, the area amounting to 100 acres. Adding the 250 acres to that previously felled brings the total up to 333 acres, 83 of which were grassed in 1896. Grass- and clover-seed has been bought for the 250 acres, but only that required for the portion burnt has been delivered, as the settlers have not safe storage-room, and there is no Government building in the settlement fit for the purpose. In addition to the felling, an aggregate of 19 acres of the older clearings has been cleared of logs and the smaller stumps, for garden and cropping purposes. Six of the settlers have planted fruit-trees, to the estimated total value of £16. Each settler has a fairly good slab whare or hut, valued at an average of £11 10s. each. Only one has received the £10 aid towards building, and his cottage is valued at £30. Fencing to the value of £30 has been erected. Most of the