

SOUTHLAND.

During the year it has been found necessary to carry out a good many contracts under ordinary tender conditions, the nature of the work preventing the application of the co-operative system—that is, where horses and drays are required it has been found impracticable to give the work to men who are not possessed of these. In every case, however, where mere labour is required without the necessity of providing a working plant the system has been applied.

During the year 98 contracts have been let. These include bushfelling on improved-farm settlements and on roadworks, bushfelling, formation, and ditching contracts.

The lowest wage earned is 2s. 9d., and the highest 8s. 8½d.; the mean for the district is 5s. 5½d. per day. The great difference shown between the highest and lowest is accounted for in several ways: Incapacity on the part of some of the men employed. In some cases settlement farmers put on their sons (mere boys) and class them as men. The time supplied has also to be somewhat discounted—that is, full time is returned for all weathers. Want of experience on the part of both the men and headman is another factor. The men are, as a whole, satisfied with the prices, which are, as a rule, quite equal to public-tender contracts. This is shown by the fact that settlers prefer this to contractors' wages. Of course, this may be accounted for by the greater freedom it allows, and also in some cases the work is nearer their homes. Settlers recognise that these works have given them substantial assistance in carrying on and paying their rents, and to the industrious they have been a decided boon. One of the difficulties in connection with the system is that a certain number of men depend too much on this class of work, and clamour when it is not found for them. As a set-off against this I may, however, say that the great majority of men carry out their contracts satisfactorily, even in cases where through unforeseen difficulties they had been unable to earn fair wages. One or two small misunderstandings have arisen, but upon the whole the system has worked well during the year, and, briefly put, this class of work can be done as cheaply as by competitive tender in bush country; but in open country, where horses, drays, graders, &c., are required, the contractor with such a plant can do cheaper work.

D. BARRON, Chief Surveyor.

APPENDIX No. 5.—IMPROVED-FARM SETTLEMENTS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS OF CROWN LANDS AND OTHERS ON THE IMPROVED-FARM SETTLEMENTS FOR THE TWELVE MONTHS ENDED 31st MARCH, 1898.

AUCKLAND.

The *Rangitira Settlement* has not made much progress, doubtless owing to its being the furthest north of these settlements, and therefore the most unattractive to settlers. Only three settlers are resident, who have felled 68 acres of forest, and burnt and grassed 52 acres. They have erected 50 chains of fencing, and own two horses and eight head of cattle.

The *Awatuna Settlement* has only four selectors resident, holding 400 acres, out of ten original selectors; its progress has been, however, more marked, as there are 335 acres of forest felled, of which 273 are burnt and grassed, and 32 acres logged and burnt ready for sowing. There are 6½ acres of garden, 60 chains of fencing erected, the houses and outhouses are valued at £113, whilst the settlement owns twenty-two head of cattle, eleven horses, four pigs, and eighty-two head of poultry.

The *Mangatu Settlement* has a very much better record, and is on the high road to success. There were ten original selectors, who are still resident, holding 1,000 acres. They have felled 444 acres of forest, burnt and grassed 364 acres, logged and burnt 72 acres. They have erected 225 chains of fencing, and have 9 acres of garden; the value of the houses and outhouses amounts to £289. They own fifty-five head of cattle, seventeen horses, fifteen pigs, and 142 head of poultry.

The *Katui Settlement*, like the Mangatu, has a very good record of progress. The whole of the nine selectors, holding 875 acres, are resident. They have felled 299 acres of forest, and burnt and grassed 274 acres, logged and burnt 45 acres; have erected 547 chains of fencing, worth at least £273; have also 13 acres of garden ground. The value of their houses and outhouses is £306. They own ninety-five head of cattle, nine horses, nineteen pigs, and 270 head of poultry.

Every effort has been made, where possible, to assist the settlers on all the above-mentioned settlements by giving them roadwork when money was available, and also by allowing them to fell kauri-trees on their own sections and on Crown lands by payment of a royalty. The timber had to be felled by co-operative gangs working together, each party being allowed to dispose of the timber to any one who would purchase it; the only stipulation being that only the resident settlers were to be employed at this work, so that the money earned might be kept amongst them. Of course, some of the settlers are physically incapable of the severe labour required in felling kauri, &c., and for these roadwork must be provided, if possible.

AUCKLAND SOUTH.

Te Rauamoa (on the Alexandra-Kawhia Road, about seventeen miles from Pirongia Township).—This is a bush settlement, and was founded towards the end of 1895.