

Seventy-Mile Bush, I take great pleasure in stating that the two settlements Mauriceville and Eketahuna, situated in this end of the Seventy-Mile Bush, in the Wellington Province, have made considerable and satisfactory progress during the last year.

The settlement of Mauriceville, situated about four miles in the bush—that is, four miles from the edge of the Seventy-Mile Bush, and extending five miles towards the interior—comprises 4,000 acres or 89 sections, and of these sections 76 are occupied by *bona fide* settlers, embracing 3,327 acres.

All the occupants of sections in this settlement have more than fulfilled the conditions imposed upon them, in the way of clearing a certain quantity of land and laying it down in grass. The total extent cleared and laid in grass is about 750 acres, making an average of 10 acres for each settler. But this is only given as an average, as some of the settlers have as many as 20 acres felled and cleared.

Every settler occupies a good-sized, comfortable, and neatly-constructed cottage, the appearance of which indicates a strong and laudable eagerness on their part to establish themselves and families in comfortable and permanent homes.

They grow sufficient crops for their own consumption for the whole year, and, with extraneous assistance, they can sustain themselves and families in a favourable comparison with any settlers in the country, and provide themselves against any possible exigencies that may arise in an infant settlement in the centre of a forest.

They all possess from three to ten head of cattle, besides a few sheep and horses, and I have observed that they never lose an opportunity of adding to their stock when their circumstances, pecuniarily, allow. I find that each neighbour vies with the other as to who can make the most improvements on his land, and the same praiseworthy spirit of emulation appears to actuate the majority of them; so that the result of such rivalry cannot but result satisfactorily, not only to themselves but to the advance and progress of the settlement. Before referring to the settlement of Eketahuna and its progress, I must allude to the employment on the public works of the Mauriceville settlers. These settlers had most favourable opportunities of benefiting themselves pecuniarily, and a great many of them availed themselves of these opportunities; although, on the other hand, some of them devoted too much time to their land, instead of taking advantage of the works carried on in their district. Hence the inability of those to pay up their indebtedness to the Government. I must also state that, for the last eight months the work carried on in the district has not been commensurate with the number of men dependent upon public works. They had therefore to seek work in other districts. The state of education is very backward, and the absence of a school is very much felt by the children, who are very numerous and will number over eighty (80).

The Board of Education has authorized the erection of a school-house in the settlement; but the contractor has not yet proceeded with the work, but I hope will do so forthwith.

The settlement of Eketahuna, or Mellenskov, eighteen miles from the edge of the bush, comprises over 1,100 acres, divided into 24 sections, all of which are occupied by a very superior class of settlers. An extent of 300 acres has been cleared, making an average of nearly 13 acres per each settler. Like the settlement of Mauriceville, the land is of good quality, and the settlement itself occupies a very important position on the main line of road which runs through it. These settlers have taken unerring advantage of the public works carried on in the district, and have thereby been enabled to pay up in full their indebtedness to the Government, and also instalments on account of their land. It will be unnecessary for me to state anything further as regards the progress of this settlement; by doing so I should only give a repetition of what I have already stated with regard to the settlement of Mauriceville. As no doubt district roads will be opened up in the course of a few months, affording these settlers employment, I have no hesitation in stating that those settlements will be the most thriving and successful in the North Island. Before concluding, I wish to draw the attention of the Government to the difficulties the Mauriceville settlers have to experience in consequence of the bad roads through the settlement. In this matter they are not in such a good position as the Eketahuna settlers, although they are nearer Masterton. They have to go off the main road and travel a bad by-road, whereas the Eketahuna settlers can follow the main road to their very homes. They could construct the road cheaply, and the moneys earned would, as far as they could afford, go towards paying their liabilities.

I have, &c.,

ALEXANDER MUNRO.

The Immigration Officer, Wellington.

## No. 8.

The IMMIGRATION OFFICER, Blenheim, to the UNDER SECRETARY for IMMIGRATION.

*Immigration Officer's Report for the Year ended 30th June, 1876.*

DURING the past year about 200 immigrants have been introduced, who have already found employment. During the early part of the year labour was very scarce, and great disappointment existed that the expected shipload direct to this province did not arrive.

Wages still continue to maintain the prices of the last two or three years. Mechanics, 10s. to 12s. per day; labourers about town, 8s.; labourers in the country, 20s. to 25s. a week with board and lodging, rising at harvest time to 35s. to 40s.

The prospects of next year are good. I do not apprehend any reduction in the value of labour. Employment may be slack for any arriving immediately, but, as soon as spring fairly sets in, there is sure to be a demand for the services of all who are able and willing.

CYRUS GOULTER,

Immigration Officer.